

Bangalore Pottery Town

Nancy Zrymiak takes a trip to the home of the ancient tradition of pottery making.

Pottery Town is tucked away near Frazer Town and the Cantonment Railway station. Most of the pottery seen around town is handmade in this small neighbourhood. Decades ago, the government leased the land to 60 potters. Now, Pottery Town consists of one main street and a few small lanes with 23 families living and working out of their homes.

From mud to art, signs of pottery making are everywhere throughout the tiny neighbourhood. Vats of mud await the potter's creative hands. Rows of newly made items are laid out to dry in the hot sun. Clay pots and other wares are stacked in front of homes and piled high on balconies. A peek inside might find potters busy at their wheels or putting finishing touches on statues of gods.



Three crumbling, open-air brick kilns are shared between the families and get fired up only when many items have accumulated. There is a mystic quality during the "firing cycle" as smoke rises and swirls around the stacked vessels.

Pottery is always high in demand and these potters are kept busy. The market for clay pots, cups, wind chimes, flower pots and vases is year round. But the busiest time of the year is festival season.

Six months before Ganesh Chaturthi the potters start making Ganesh statues of all shapes and sizes. They churn out fingers, toes, bellies, trunks and heads and eventually mould the parts together to form the much loved elephant-headed God.

With Diwali just around the corner, the streets of Pottery Town are lined with clay diyas, the small lanterns used to light up homes during the festival. One young potter, who attends college until 2:00pm, comes home and makes up to 500 diyas a day.

The ancient custom of pottery making is carried on by a few dedicated families in Pottery Town. Pottery can be found almost anywhere in India - in homes, gardens, restaurants and even on trains to serve hot chai. Pottery is such an important part of the Indian culture, and the potters of Pottery Town continue to play a big part in keeping the tradition alive. ❁