



Reliving the Summer of Love

California's summer calendar is packed with events commemorating 50 years of the hippie revolution of 1967

BY RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

I am in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood, looking at a Ben & Jerry's ice-cream shop that stands at the famous corner where artists, writers and musicians had gathered during the "Summer of Love", in 1967.

This gathering of about 100,000 people was the crescendo of an anti-establishment movement that had begun as a response to America's involvement in the Vietnam War. It rapidly grew to questioning everything that was considered the established norm, in fields as varied as lifestyle, literature, fashion and music. They showed up wearing psychedelic shirts, bell-bottom pants, and flowers in their hair. And words like karma, *kama sutra* and free love were used liberally in discussions on spirituality and sex. Besides the chants of "make love not war", there were also the first mentions of local and organic produce, attributes that largely define California's culinary landscape today.

Though the famous corner of Haight-Ashbury might be taken, there's still plenty in the neighbourhood that harks back to the Summer of Love. There are numerous striking murals: One features Jerry Garcia of Grateful Dead, another an ecstatic Jimi Hendrix with his guitar. There are murals of women with flowers in their hair, goddess Kali and assorted bits of pop art. And as I walk down the streets, I spot the houses once occupied by Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Grateful Dead and the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club. There are still plenty of shops that pay homage to the period, with names like The Love of Ganesh and Amoeba Music (Wild San Francisco Walking tours has a great guided pay-as-you-like walk of the neighbourhood; Wildsfours.com).

You can join the revelry as California celebrates 50 years of the Summer of Love with a series of events, exhibitions and experiences. Soaking in the revival nostalgia on a recent road trip through the sunshine state, I made a list of events, many of which are already on:

IN SAN FRANCISCO

Magic Bus tour
At San Francisco's Union Square, hop on to this retro-fitted bus for a 2-hour trip. The bus tour uses music, drop-down screens over its windows and skilled guides to help visitors explore the visionary mix of music, art, politics and culture which came together in Haight-Ashbury in 1967. With bubbles floating through the air and flowers to put in your hair, this is one bus you shouldn't miss.
Magicbusf.com/tour/anniversary-summer-of-love; on till 15 September.

The Summer of Love Experience—Art, Fashion, and Rock & Roll, de Young Museum



This exhibition explores the visual and material cultures of a generation searching for personal fulfilment through social change. It does it through a wide array of iconic rock posters, interactive music and light shows, flamboyant clothing and photographs. Some of the posters featured were designed by artists like Victor Moscoso, Stanley Mouse and Wes Wilson. There are also handcrafted, one-of-a-kind garments created by such designers as Birgitta Bjerke, K. Lee Manuel and Jeanne Rose. Don't miss the rock poster featuring the Taj Mahal.
Deyoung.famsf.org/summer-love-art-fashion-and-rock-roll; on till 20 August.

The Beat Museum

This unique museum features books from the 1950s that were considered subversive or counterculture, and came to be known as Beat Literature. It is widely believed that beatniks such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassady fanned the anti-establishment sentiments of the period with their writing. Memorabilia at the museum includes first editions, letters and personal effects.
Kerouac.com.

Hippie Modernism—The Struggle For Utopia, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

This exhibition at the beautifully designed and spacious Berkeley Art Museum explores how art, architecture and design intersected with the counterculture of the 1960s and early 1970s. It charts the evolution of one of the most fertile periods of recent cultural history, one that witnessed a variety of radical experiments that challenged tradition and convention, overturned customary hierarchies, explored new media and materials and formed alternative communities.
Bampfa.berkeley.edu/program/hippie-modernism-struggle-utopia; on till 21 May.

IN MONTEREY

Monterey International Pop Festival
Taking place at the height of the Summer of Love, from 16-18 June, the Monterey International Pop Festival is recognized globally as an important event in the history of rock 'n' roll music. The festival captured the spirit of the time, ushering in a new era of rock 'n' roll. It launched the careers of Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Grateful Dead, The Who, and Janis Joplin.
Fun fact: Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar also played at this festival. Interestingly, his daughter Norah Jones will perform at the forthcoming Monterey International Pop Festival, taking place at the same venue, the Monterey County Fairgrounds, on the same dates.

(from top) Fifty years on, Haight-Ashbury keeps the memory of the Summer of Love alive with murals on buildings; a candid photo of the Summer of Love, 1967, displayed at the Sunset Marquis hotel in West Hollywood; and a shop on Haight Street that sells spirituality paraphernalia.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

During my road trip, I was shown around the venue by photographer Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal, who was present at the 1967 festival. Among the many stories he had to tell, the most fascinating was about a carpenter who was hired to extend the stage and did a neat job of it. That carpenter was none other than actor Harrison Ford. He also vividly described how Jimi Hendrix went down on his knees and set fire to his guitar, as if sacrificing it at the altar of music. So stunning and impactful was the act that the bands that followed Jimi Hendrix's set were completely overshadowed. One of those bands was The Mamas & the Papas, who were at the very height of their popularity at the time.
Montereypopfestival50.com.

IN LOS ANGELES

Jim Marshall's 1967, The Grammy Museum
The Grammy Museum in Los Angeles is holding the *Jim Marshall's 1967* exhibition, showcasing 60 of the thousands of images music photographer Jim Marshall captured during the summer of 1967. Marshall had extended access to many of the musicians through the 1960s and 1970s, and was the official photographer at Woodstock. He shot the iconic photo of Jimi Hendrix with his guitar on fire that is on display on the second floor, special exhibits gallery of The Grammy Museum at LA Live, Los Angeles.
Grammymuseum.org/exhibits/jimmarshall; on till 14 May. This exhibition is also on display at the San Francisco City Hall; on till 23 June.

The complete list of events is available at Sftravel.com/summer-love-2017.

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DETOURS

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The real Gangnam style



The Cheonggyecheon river walk is a recreation space in downtown Seoul.

The US vice-president, Mike Pence, was staying at my hotel, I discovered, as I arrived in Seoul the week the world feared the Korean Peninsula would turn into a ball of fire. Secret service officials in black talked into concealed microphones on their lapels and nodded to advice from the visible earphones. The plush hotel was a picture of calm, as if it was business as usual, but there were metal detectors everywhere and humourless American officials who avoided eye contact in elevators. The staff smiled politely to make up for the coldness that had descended on the hotel.

I had been warned about the rising tensions in Korea, and expected to see panic among the Koreans. The hotel staff is meant to present contrived cheerfulness—but what about the vast, bustling city? My college friend Sudha and her husband Vasudev, a senior executive with a large corporation, live in Seoul. They disabused me of all such notions and anxieties as they took me to the Cheonggyecheon urban renewal project, which revived an old canal, turning it into a place where people come to cycle and walk. At the long walkway along the canal, cherry blossoms were in full bloom, families were enjoying a lovely Sunday strolling along the promenade, and lovers were exchanging sweet nothings. I saw two men in uniform, most likely students on national military service, walking with a shopping bag, looking anything but prepared for imminent nuclear war. The city seemed blissfully unaware of the conflict that television networks and international strategists were anticipating like restless fans around a boxing ring.

We went to a restaurant called Hanil in Jongno, where we had *doenjang-jjigae*, or bean paste soup, with kimchi of cucumber and cabbage, boiled green vegetables, and four types of barbecued fish—*hwangtae* (pollock), *jogi* (croaker), *samchi* (Japanese-Spanish mackerel), *godeuengo* (mackerel)—and *soju*, the high-potency alcoholic drink. Later we drove to the riverfront, where tulips were planted like soldiers on a parade ground and families had laid out tents. Children ran around chasing frisbees, young women jogged, others rode bicycles along a dedicated track as the sun mellowed, the river glowed, and the tall yellow grass swayed gently in the breeze. And at that twilight hour I wondered at all the fuss about war.

The day after Pence left, I decided to go boldly where he had gone before—the demilitarized zone, or Dee-Em-Zee (not Zed; there are American troops here, not British), which is how the locals refer to the 38th Parallel, which divided the Korean Peninsula in two when the war ended in 1953. Politics has stayed frozen along that barbed-wire fence, the last remnant of the Cold War. Pence spent a few minutes squinting and glaring angrily at North Korea, probably imagining himself as Ronald Reagan at the Berlin Wall. But he didn't say anything as memorable as Reagan did, for he lacks Reagan's charisma and speech-writers (Reagan had intoned, "Mr Gorbachev, tear down that wall," and a few years later, East Germans did. North Koreans arrested an American academic who was in the country after Pence went back to Washington).

It isn't possible to go to the border on one's own, so I joined an organized tour. We had to carry our passports and were told the military could cancel the tour at short notice. Whether that was meant seriously or was part of the security theatre choreographed to make tourists feel the tension, I don't know. What was apparent, though, was how the city made way for the countryside, which turned desolate as we saw road signs saying "Pyongyang"—a fantasy, dreaming of the day when the road will indeed lead all the way to that mysterious capital.

We reached a spot where an old, rusty railway engine stood, with gaping holes caused by incessant shelling. A barbed fence stood alongside; visitors had tied hundreds of ribbons—yellow and white and pink and red and blue—with messages of peace written on them. Wild grass had grown on the land around, and plaintive Korean songs of peace played through loudspeakers. As if to remind us of the incipient danger, military jets flew nearby, and we heard loud bangs as they broke the sound barrier, making a few of us shudder, as if bombing had begun.

Further north were the tunnels. In the 1970s, South Korea discovered four tunnels that North Koreans had built to reach Seoul, capable of carrying thousands of troops and tanks. The discovery heightened South Korea's perpetual sense of vulnerability; the North simply denied it.

Later, at the observation point, we could see North Korea through the binoculars. From that great distance—about 3km, through haze—it was difficult to see much. The hills were barren, we were told, because people cut trees for firewood since the villages have no electricity. The foliage on the ground was thick, however, and our South Korean tour guide said that was to hide weapons. The few homes in the North that we could see looked neat and tidy—Potemkin villages.

We then left for Dorasan, a Disneyland-like railway station less than a kilometre from the border, looking like a teenager all dressed up with nowhere to go. It was built during the "sunshine policy" that former South Korean president, the Nobel laureate Kim Dae Jung, had pursued, to connect Seoul and Pyongyang by rail. The station is ready, but the train from Seoul stops here. The path northward must wait.

Back in Seoul, I went with my friends to Gangnam, or "south of the river," the trendy, newer part of the city. The residual tension I felt from the border visit evaporated. At Gangnam Square, we mimicked—badly—Psy's moves from the video that was briefly famous around the world as amused Koreans indulged us and took our photographs. We were less than 64 kilometres from the border, but the imminent war seemed light years away.

Salil Tripathi writes the column Here, There, Everywhere for Mint.

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