

History, jalebi and masala tea in Southall



Start Southall rail
Finish Southall Market
Duration 90 minutes

Just 15 minutes on the train from Paddington and you'll find yourself smack-bang in the middle of London's most magnificent paradox. Southall, or 'Little India', as it used to be known, has been home to Indian and Pakistani communities since the '50s, and east African Asians since the '70s. With its Punjabi street signs and giant Sikh temples (Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh on Havelock Road is the largest outside India) you can see why it is billed as our most exotic outpost.

Turning right out of the station, the first stop is **Glassy Junction (1)**, an Indian pub that takes rupees as payment for its Cobra and Kingfisher beers. It's worth a visit even if just to gawp at the juxtaposition of working men's club skankiness and Indian ostentation. After a swift glass (of beer or lassi) head back on to South Road to the legendary **Quality Foods (2)** supermarket (a sort of grown-up version of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory for Indian foodies) and onward into the centre of Southall. Just minutes away you will see the **Himalaya Palace (3)**. Designed by George Coles in 1929, this Grade II-listed Chinese pagoda-inspired structure is now a three-screen Bollywood cinema. Continue to the junction where South Road meets Southall Broadway and you'll find a **cluster of shops (4)** where you can buy your own Bollywood films (Bollywood Corner does four DVDs for £10) along with the hottest bhangra releases.

The Broadway, with its designer jewellery and clothing boutiques jostling for space with pound shops, is the beating heart of Southall. But 30 years ago it was the epicentre of storm. On April 23 1979, the National Front attempted



to hold a meeting at the Town Hall (now a business centre just off the High Street). Thousands of people marched in protest, escalating into what is now remembered as the Southall Riots. Blair Peach, a young teacher from New Zealand, was allegedly killed by a blow to the head by police, on the corner of Beachcroft and Orchard Avenue. Local businessman Shanawar Chaudry was there, and over a couple of sweet jalebis and a cup of steaming hot masala tea at his popular food spot **Jalebi Junction (5)** he tells me: 'Until that point, I think people thought of Asians as meek and submissive – the racists certainly did. But it had been building up to that moment [Gurdip Singh Chaggar was murdered by racists in 1976 and there were a spate of attacks before the riots]. We stood our ground and protected our homes. For me, that was the day that Southall came of age.'

A group of local artists and activists – Bollywood composer Kuljit Bhamra, film director Shakila Maan and Pragna Patel of the

Southall Black Sisters – are curating 'The Southall Story', a series of exhibitions and events celebrating the history of the area. 'I think the story of Southall needs to be told,' says Shan as we walk up the road to **Chaudhry's TKC Restaurant (6)**, the pioneering eatery opened by his father in 1965 and now famous for its traditional Pakistani *larri* (bus) which drives around town. 'It's not just the story of the Asian community – 30 years ago everyone, white, black, brown, came together to fight against those fascists. The story of Southall belongs to all of us.'

Saying goodbye to Shan, I head to my last stop: **Southall Market (7)**. Dragging a bag of mangoes (four for £1) and lemons (ten for £1), I head to meet Shakila Maan at the Southall Black Sisters on Avenue Road. With just four full-time staff, the Sisters do an amazing job campaigning, advocating,

supporting, even feeding, female victims of violence. 'We've faced opposition from elders in the community, who used to call us homewreckers, and we've had very little support from the council [the Sisters recently won a landmark case against Ealing Council for funding support], but we'll continue to do what we do until there is no need for us.'

Tamara Gausi

For more information visit www.southallstory.com.

On June 16, a celebrity panel will be at the British Library to discuss 'Southall – Music & Life' (part of the Story of London Festival – see this issue's pull-out guide).

For more on the Southall Black Sisters visit www.southallblacksisters.org.uk. Indian chef Monisha Bharadwaj offers food walks through Southall (next July 18; email monishabharadwaj@hotmail.com).

