

# A colourful experience for expats in city

Anjali Shetty

anjalishetty@live.com

**PUNE:** Mattia Salimbeni from the Extentia Information Technology Pvt Ltd is thrilled and in awe of the music, dance and huge Ganesh idols on the roads in the city during the Ganesh Festival.

"I don't know why, but I'm kind of attracted by Ganesh, in the sense that it gives me a sense of comfort even though I personally have nothing to do with Hindu beliefs. You can smell spirituality in the air.

"I relished the special food prepared for the festival, so am looking forward to taste more delicacies in the next few days. I am especially looking forward to the celebration of the 12th day immersion. I have heard it is very colourful, and I want to witness the custom of immersing the idol," he said.

Like Mattia, Pune has many expats who have been involved with Ganeshotsav in the city for several years.

For interior designer Jwala (Anke Van Beveren), Lord Ganesh brings peace and tranquility. "When I moved to India years ago, I was mesmerised by the cultural outburst of festivals celebrated in India and specifically in Pune. My office employees/workers introduced me to the concept of puja, religion and God. I am amazed at how India holds on to so many beliefs. Ganesh holds a special spot in my life because I was told that he takes away evil from one's life and brings in happiness," Jwala



said. The Ganesh idol is changed every three years and this year Jwala will have two idols.

"This year, we will bid adieu to the earlier idol and welcome a new one. We conduct the aarti at the muburat and I do it myself," shared Jwala.

The employees shop for everything during Ganeshotsav and decorate the mandir. "We collect money over the months in a piggy bank, which is then used for prasad and decoration," adds Jwala.

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MATTIA SALIMBENI, Extentia Information Technology

Trust an artist to be inclined towards Lord Ganesh.

Artist Shola Carletti may not follow the exact rituals and traditions of the festival, but that

does not stop her from worshipping the God of wisdom.

The first visual memory of India when artist Shola Carletti shifted here is that of Lord Ganesh.

"It is the first thing I noticed when I came down to India. The idol is endearing and I completely adore Ganesh," said Shola Carletti.

An artist who expresses her work in gold, Shola identifies with the idol in many ways. "I absolutely love the witty eyes,



(Clockwise from left) Mattia Salimbeni from Italy loves celebrating the Ganesh Festival. Jwala with her office employees installs a Ganesh idol every three years. Artist Shola Carletti believes that Pune's strong cultural influence induces a happy and endearing vibe in everyone.

RAVINDRA JOSHI/HT PHOTO



endearing belly and abundant feelings that come across from him. It reflects my personality as I, too, love having people over and I am welcoming," shared Shola.

Shola adds that Pune's strong cultural influence brings induces a happy and endearing vibe in everyone around.

"I hope Bappa will help improve the art scene in the city. We really need people to take art seriously and look at it as a potential career choice."

Maria Sierpinski, PMO, Extentia Information Technology Pvt Ltd appreciates the fact that Ganesh helps us in overcoming obstacles since we all have those regardless of who we are. "I try to focus on something I'd like to overcome and keep that in the back of my mind so it becomes a very personal connection to something that is actually pretty foreign to me. I love the drums during the festival, it makes me happy and excited," Maria said.