

Lifestyle

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Roses are piled up at wholesale flower market in Kolkata. The roses are high in demand as seven days of festivity of the Valentine Week starts from February 7 with Rose Day. — AFP

COUPLES MAKE VALENTINE'S DAY DEPOSIT IN 'LOVE BANK'



A guide opens a box ready to store a love story inside the Love Bank, part of the interactive exhibition dedicated to the longest love poem in the world.



Children take part in the interactive exhibition dedicated to the longest love poem in the world, written by Andrej Sladkovic in 1844 - Marina, in Banska Stiavnica.



Visitors interact with the Love-o-meter, an interactive exhibition which expresses the strength of one's love in verses from the poem Marina.

In a small medieval Slovak town, couples are getting ready on Valentine's Day to make a "deposit" about their romance in a place dedicated to love stories. The "Love Bank" is the main attraction of an exhibition commemorating the world's longest love poem, "Marina" by Slovak poet Andrej Sladkovic. Written in 1844, the 2,900-line long poem tells the tale of the doomed love between the poet and Maria Pischlova. They were star-crossed lovers but unlike Romeo and Juliet their tragic romance is a true story. Marina's parents shunned the poor poet and forced her to marry a wealthy gingerbread maker.

“Lovers can only make 'deposits' a few times a year—the next date is Valentine's Day”

mer silver mining town of Banska Stiavnica is now known as the "Epicentre of Love" and features an interactive exhibition inspired by the poem, including a "love-o-meter" measuring the strength of a couple's affection. "Our visitors say they are amazed by how a part of history and a poem that was on their elementary school compulsory reading list has been turned into a hands-on experience," said Katarina Javorska, spokeswoman for the NGO running the exhibition.

100,000 boxes

For many couples, it's the "Love Bank" that attracts them to the site where they can store and preserve mementos of their

romance. A long tunnel in the basement of the house has been turned into a vault with exactly 100,000 tiny drawers, one for each letter, gap, and punctuation mark of the original, 174-year-old manuscript of "Marina". Lovers can only make "deposits" a few times a year—the next date is Valentine's Day. "My fiancée and I will come back in a couple of days and hide the cinema tickets from our first date here," 24-year-old Dominika Hrabusova told AFP.

Another couple, Jan and Anna have brought their seven-month-old baby son along. "This is our fourth or fifth visit to Banska Stiavnica, before we got married we used to come more often," said 38-year-old Jan. "The town is a jewel box itself, I am impressed by how clever and inventive this exhibition is," he adds, lauding the charm of Banska Stiavnica, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993.

As visitors to the exhibition pass through rooms combin-

ing modern design and 500-year-old rafters, a truly Potteresque experience awaits them: four "paintings"—large flat-screen TVs—on the wall suddenly come alive and act out scenes from the life of the poet and Marina.

In another room, one can flip through the pages of the "Register of Love", weighing 53 kilograms (117 pounds) and consisting of 3,200 pages that will be gradually filled with notes from lovers who visit the former dwelling of the poet's muse.

The designers of the exhibition eye turning the "Epicentre of Love" into a major attraction, a sort of place of pilgrimage for lovers from across the globe. "Some say it's a bold and ambitious plan. But if millions are willing to make the trip to Verona to see the balcony of the imaginary couple of Romeo and Juliet, I believe many will come to the Epicentre of Love to relive a real love story," Javorska said. — AFP



A couple takes a selfie with a mobile phone inside the Love Bank, part of the interactive exhibition dedicated to the longest love poem in the world, written by Andrej Sladkovic in 1844 - Marina, in Banska Stiavnica on February 3, 2018. — AFP photos



A couple visits the interactive exhibition dedicated to the longest love poem in the world, written by Andrej Sladkovic in 1844 - Marina.