



Goa

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Best Places to Eat

- » Upper House (p805)
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- » Seasonal beach shacks (all over)
- » Plantain Leaf (p816)

Best Places to Stay

- » Nilaya Hermitage (p816)
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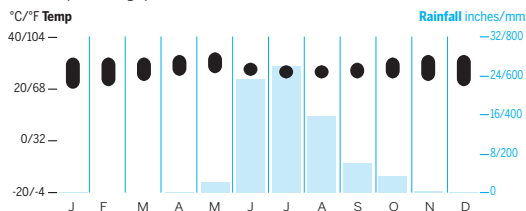
Why Go?

It's green, it's glistening and it's gorgeous: just three of the reasons why Goa has allured travellers for decades. Two million visitors come each year for the silken sand, crystalline shores, cocohut culture and *susegad* – a Portuguese-derived term that translates loosely to 'laid-backness'.

But there's more to discover here than the pleasure of warm sand between your toes. Goa is as beautiful and culturally rich as it is tiny and hassle-free, so you can go bird-watching in a butterfly-filled forest, marvel at centuries-old cathedrals, venture out to white-water waterfalls or meander the capital's charming alleyways, all in between lazy beach days (or weeks). Pour in a dash of Portuguese-influenced food and architecture, infuse with a colourful blend of religious traditions, pepper with parties, and you've got a heady mix that makes Goa easy to enjoy and extremely hard to leave.

When to Go

Goa (Panaji)



Early Nov The rains are over and the waterfalls are full – but the beaches aren't.

Early Dec Festivals galore and great weather, just before the high-peak prices and crowds.

Mar Carnival. Enough said.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Tiny Dabolim Airport handles all flights. Margao Railway Station is the state's largest and best connected, and Mapusa and Panaji bus terminals are your best bet for long-distance rides.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 1.5 million
- » Area: 3701 sq km
- » Capital: Panaji (Panjim)
- » Telephone code: 0832
- » Main languages: Konkani, Marathi, English and Hindi
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500

Top Tip

Don't swim wasted! And stay away during Christmas and New Year's, when the parties are raging but so are the prices and the hordes.

Resources

- » Goa Tourism (www.goa-tourism.com) Good background and tour info.
- » Goa World (www.goa-world.com) General info on Goan culture.
- » Goa's English dailies (www.navhindtimes.in, www.oheraldo.in) For the news.

Food

Goans tend to be hearty meat and fish eaters, and fresh seafood is a staple, as is the quintessential Goan lunch 'fish-curry-rice': fried mackerel steeped in coconut, tamarind and chilli sauce. The good, genuine cooking can be hard to find in the tourist areas, but hunt around and you'll be rewarded with your best souvenir: memories of a stellar vindaloo (fiery dish in a marinade of vinegar and garlic) or *xacuti* (a spicy chicken or meat dish cooked in red coconut sauce).

DON'T MISS

There's little chance of missing the **beach** – it's spectacular and it's everywhere – but don't give in to the temptation to laze on it nonstop. **Yoga** is ubiquitous in Goa – in both long-course and short-class form – and even for dabblers, it's the perfect yin to beach-lounging's yang. Palolem has lots of **trekking** and even canyoning opportunities, and **birds, forests and waterfalls** are just waiting to be enjoyed inland. Goa has a fascinating **history** that also shouldn't be missed: set aside some time to explore evocative Panaji (Panjim), Old Goa, Quepem and Chandor.

Top State Festivals

- » Feast of the Three Kings (6 Jan, Chandor, p827) Boys re-enact the story of the three kings bearing gifts for Christ.
- » Shigmotsav (Shigmo) of Holi (Feb/Mar, statewide) Goa's version of the Hindu festival Holi sees coloured powders thrown about and parades in most towns.
- » Sabado Gordo (Feb/Mar, Panaji, p800) A procession of floats and street parties on the Saturday before Lent.
- » Carnival (Mar, statewide) A four-day festival kicking off Lent; the party's particularly jubilant in Panaji.
- » Fama de Menino Jesus (2nd Mon in Oct, Colva, p830) Colva's Menino Jesus statue is paraded through town.
- » International Film Festival of India (Nov, Panaji, p800) Film screenings and Bollywood glitterati everywhere.
- » Feast of St Francis Xavier (3 Dec, Panaji, p800, Old Goa, p807) A celebration of Goa's patron saint; once every decade (the next one is 2014), the saint's body is carried through Old Goa's streets.
- » Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (8 Dec, Margao, p825, Panaji, p800) Fairs and concerts are held, as is a beautiful church service at Panaji's Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.



Goa Highlights

- 1 Wander the Portuguese quarters of **Panaji** (Panjim; p800) and linger over lunch at one of its ravishing restaurants
- 2 Indulge in barefoot luxury on quiet white-sand **beaches** in the state's sleepy southern stretches
- 3 Open up your chakras while doing **yoga** to the rhythm of ocean waves and swaying palms
- 4 Dream of times gone by in the mansions of **Quepem** (p829) and **Chander** (p827)
- 5 Shiver in the shadows of grand cathedrals and observe the countryside from a hilltop chapel in **Old Goa** (p807)
- 6 Feel the wind in your hair while you **ride your bicycle or scooter** through palm-tree jungles and rice-paddy fields
- 7 Worship the sun away from the northern crowds on the beautiful beach at **Mandrem** (p823)

History

Goa went through a dizzying array of rulers from Ashoka's Mauryan empire in the 3rd century BC to the long-ruling Kadambas, who in AD 1054 moved their capital from present-day Chandor to a new settlement called Govepuri, today's little village of Goa Velha. The centuries following saw much conflict, with the Muslim Delhi sultanate and then Bahmani sultanate fighting the Hindu Vijayanagar empire for control; these were violent times, and in addition to many deaths, Hindu temples were also razed. (Tiny Tambdi Surla temple, constructed during the Kadamba reign, was the only one to survive.) The Adil Shahs of Bijapur, formerly part of the Bahmani sultanate, created the capital we now call Old Goa in the 15th century.

The Portuguese arrived in 1510, seeking control of the region's lucrative spice routes by way of Goa's wide natural harbours and plentiful waterways. They defeated the Bijapur kings and steadily pushed their power from their grand capital at Old Goa out into the provinces. (The Goa State Museum in Panaji has lots of interesting artefacts from this period.) Soon after, Portuguese rule and religion spread throughout the state – sometimes by force – and the Goan Inquisition brought repression and brutality in the name of Christianity. It was not until 1961, when the Indian army marched into Goa, that almost five centuries of Portuguese occupation finally came to an end on the subcontinent.

Today Goa enjoys one of India's highest per-capita incomes and comparatively high health and literacy rates, with tourism, iron-ore mining, agriculture and fishing forming the basis of its economy. The legacy of the Portuguese can still be found almost everywhere, in the state's scores of old mansions, its cuisine, its churches and even in its language; it's rare nowadays, but if you keep an ear out you may hear elderly people conversing in Portuguese.

Climate

The annual monsoon used to scour Goa's beaches clean between June and the end of September reliably, but things have gone a little haywire in recent years, and sometimes the monsoon can end as late as November. In general, though, the tourist season stretches from mid-November to mid-April, with December to February proving the most pleasant (and busiest) time to visit. Temperatures and humidity increase after February. Out of season, between April and October, you'll find most coastal resorts deserted, though towns such as Panaji, Mapusa and Margao chug on as usual.

Activities

Goa has, of late, become Activity Central, with a whole host of options for yoga and alternative therapies, water sports and wildlife-watching. Many outfits change annually, so we've only listed the longer-established operations in this chapter; for the full gamut of options, head to your beach of choice and ask around or scan the noticeboards.

WHERE TO GOA...

Goa is tiny. With enough time (and discipline to get off the beach), you can explore the state's beaches, nature *and* culture.

Very generally, Goa can be split up into three distinct regions: north, south and central. The north, above the Mandovi River, is the place for those seeking action, shopping and activities in equal supply, and for folks looking for the remnants – and they are only remnants – of Goa's fabled trance party scene. In addition, the north has some beautiful almost-empty beaches, along with a string of highly developed resorts with lots of choice in restaurants, hotels and water-sports outfits.

In central Goa, nestling between the Mandovi and Zuari Rivers, things get decidedly more cultural. Here sits Panaji (Panjim), Goa's small and loveable state capital, which slings itself comfortably along the broad banks of the Mandovi River, while inland lie spice plantations, waterfalls and the glorious vestiges of Goa's grand and glittering past in the form of mansions, temples and cathedrals.

Things slow down in the south, where the beaches grow generally quieter and the sun lounges are spaced further apart. Not the place for partying the night away, the beaches here cater to a quieter, calmer crowd, with lots of homespun charm. This is the place to sit back, unwind, and perhaps spot a hatching turtle or two.

YOGA & ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Every imaginable form of yoga, meditation, reiki, ayurvedic massage and other spiritually orientated health regime is practised, taught and relished in Goa. Palolem and Patnem, in the south of the state, and Arambol (Harmal), Mandrem, Anjuna and Calangute in the north all have courses in ayurveda, yoga, reiki and the like. Mandrem and Arambol have reputable yoga centres, and Calangute has an excellent ayurveda clinic.

WILDLIFE-WATCHING

Goa is a nature lover's paradise, perfect for wildlife-watching, with an abundance of brilliant birdlife and a fine (but well concealed) collection of fauna, including sambars, barking deer and the odd leopard. Head to Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary to scout out birds and beasts alike, or to Backwoods Camp. Day Tripper in Calangute offers various nature-related tours, while John's Boat Tours in Candolim runs birdwatching boat trips, along with crocodile- and dolphin-spotting rides. At almost any beach, though, you'll find someone with a boat eager to show you those adorable grey mammals of the sea.

WATER SPORTS

Based in Baga, Barracuda Diving, offers scuba-diving courses and trips. Parasailing and jet-skiing are readily available on the beaches at Baga, Benaulim and Colva, and you can try paragliding at Anjuna and Arambol.

Dangers & Annoyances

One of the greatest – and most deceptive – dangers in Goa is to be found right in front of your beautiful bit of beach: the Arabian Sea, with its strong currents and dangerous undertows, claims dozens of lives per year, many of them foreigners who knew how to swim. Though some of Goa's beaches are now overseen by lifeguards during daylight hours, it's extremely important to heed local warnings on the safety of swimming, and don't, whatever you do, venture into the water after drinking or taking drugs.

Other dangers and annoyances are of the rather more universal kind. Keep your valuables under lock and key, especially if you're renting an easy-to-penetrate cocohut, and don't walk along empty stretches of beach alone at night.

DRUGS

Acid, ecstasy, cocaine, charas (hashish), marijuana and all other forms of recreational drugs are illegal in India (though still very much available in Goa), and pur-

chasing or carrying drugs is fraught with danger. Goa's Fort Aguada jail is filled with prisoners, including some foreigners, serving lengthy sentences for drug offences, and being caught in possession of even a small quantity of illegal substances can mean a 10-year stay in a cockroach-infested cell.

i Information

The **Goa Tourism Development Corporation** (GTDC; www.goa-tourism.com) provides maps and information, operates (not-great) hotels throughout the state and runs a host of one-day and multiday tours. Its main office is in Panaji, but you can book its tours and get a simple map of Goa at any of its hotel branches. Panaji's Indiatourism office also has information on Goa.

ACCOMMODATION Accommodation prices in Goa are generally higher than in most other states of India and vary wildly depending on the season. High-season prices, often more than twice the mid-season rates, run from early December to early February, while prices climb higher still during the crowded Christmas and New Year period (around 22 December to 3 January). Mid-season runs from the end of October through November (when most beach shacks are just being built) and from February to April, and low season runs through the rainy season (April to October). All accommodation rates listed in this chapter are for the high season. Note, however, that prices can fluctuate incredibly from year to year, and some hotels may bump up their high-season tariffs more than others. Always call ahead for rates. In addition, the Goan government levies a hotel tax of either 5% (for rooms costing less than ₹750), 7% (₹750 to ₹1500), 10% (₹1500 to ₹3000) or 12% (over ₹3000).

Most accommodation options have a standard noon checkout, except in Panaji, where most hotels cruelly demand you depart at 9am.

i Getting There & Away

AIR Goa's sole and diminutive airport, Dabolim, is in the centre of the state, 29km south of Panaji, 30km north of Margao and an easy taxi or bus ride from any of the state's beaches. Few international flights go here directly; those that do are package-holiday charters, mostly from Russia and Britain. Independent travellers from the UK could check **Thomson** (www.thomsonfly.com), and from Germany, **Condor** (www.condor.com);

i DIAL 108 IN EMERGENCIES

In any emergency in Goa, dial 108. This will connect you to the police, fire brigade or medical services.

both offer flight-only fares. Generally, the quickest way to reach Goa from overseas is to take a flight into Mumbai (Bombay), and then a one-hour hop by domestic airline down to Goa. There are lots of domestic flights each day, starting from around ₹3500 (cheaper if you book well in advance).

Dabolim Airport has a money-exchange office, a GTDC counter, charter-airline offices, an ATM and two prepaid taxi booths.

BUS Plenty of long-distance interstate buses – both 'government' and 'private' – operate to and from Panaji, Margao, Mapusa and Chaudi, near Palolem. Fares for private operators are higher than for government buses, and they fluctuate throughout the year; in peak season, they can be triple the price of the state operators. (Some would say that they're also three times more comfortable, but this isn't always the case.) A tip for overnight journeys: sleeper buses, counter-intuitively, can be less comfortable than seaters. The seats keep you from getting tossed around with every bump and turn.

TRAIN The **Konkan Railway** (www.konkanrailway.com), the main train line running through Goa, runs between Mumbai and Mangalore. Its biggest station in Goa is Margao's Madgaon station, from which there are several useful daily services to Mumbai. Other smaller, useful stations on the line include Pernem for Arambol, Thivim for Mapusa and the northern beaches, Karmali (Old Goa) for Panaji, and Canacona for Palolem.

Other train lines out of Margao head to Chennai; Pune; Ahmedabad (Amdavad) and Vadodara (Baroda) in Gujarat; Ernakulam (for Kochi) and Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) in Kerala; Hubli in Karnataka and even Delhi.

Book tickets online (see p1185); at Madgaon station; at the train reservation office at Panaji's Kadamba bus stand; or at any travel agent vending train tickets (though you'll probably pay a small commission). Only the stations at Margao and Vasco da Gama (near Dabolim Airport) have foreign-tourist-quota booking counters. Make sure you book as far in advance as possible for sleepers, since they fill up very quickly.

See p828 for detailed train information.

i Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT Dabolim's two prepaid taxi counters – one in the arrivals hall and the other just outside – make arriving easy; buy your ticket here and you'll be ushered to a cab.

BUS Goa has an extensive network of buses, shuttling to and from almost every town and village. They run frequently and have no numbers, and fares rarely exceed ₹30. Buses are in fairly good condition and tend to be pretty efficient operations.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE It's easy in Goa to organise a private car with a driver for long-distance day trips. Prices vary, but you should bank on

paying from ₹1000 (if you're lucky) to ₹1500 for a full day out on the road (usually defined as eight hours and 80km). It's also possible, if you have the nerves and the skills, to procure a self-drive car. A small Maruti will cost from ₹600 to ₹900 per day and a jeep around ₹1000, excluding petrol; there are few organised rental outlets, so ask around for someone with a car willing to rent it to you. Note the slightly mystifying signposts posted on Goa's major National Highway 17 (NH17), which advise of different speed limits (on the largely single-carriageway road) for different types of vehicles.

You'll rarely go far on a Goan road without seeing a tourist whizzing by on a scooter or motorbike, and renting (if not driving) one is a breeze. You'll likely pay from ₹200 to ₹300 per day for a scooter, ₹400 for a smaller Yamaha motorbike, and ₹500 for a Royal Enfield Bullet. These prices can drop considerably if you're renting for more than a day or if it's an off-peak period.

Bear in mind that Goan roads are treacherous, filled with human, bovine, canine, feline, mechanical and avian obstacles, as well as a good sprinkling of potholes and hairpin bends. Take it slowly, try not to drive at night (when black cows can prove dangerous), don't attempt a north-south day trip on a 50CC scooter, and the most cautious of riders might even consider donning a helmet, which is technically the law.

TAXI Taxis are widely available for town-hopping, and, as with a chauffeured car, a full day's sightseeing, depending on the distance, will be around ₹1500. Motorcycles, known as 'pilots', are also a licensed form of taxi in Goa. They're cheap, easy to find, and can be identified by a yellow front mudguard – and even the heftiest of backpacks seem to be no obstacle.

CENTRAL GOA

Panaji (Panjim)

POP 98,915

Panaji (more commonly known as Panjim) has yellow houses with purple doors, cats lying in front of bicycles parked beneath oyster-shell windows, and paddle-wheel boats moseying along the river that laps the city's northern boundary. Oh, and a giant church on a hill that looks like a fancy white wedding cake. It's a friendly, manageable and walkable city – maybe India's cutest capital – and its Portuguese-era colonial charms make it a perfect place to while away a day or two. Stroll the peaceful streets, take a kitschy river cruise, eat vindaloes and end the evening in a cosy local bar.

WHEN IN ROME...

Venture beyond the tourist areas and you're sure to find a Goan who will sadly shake their heads and say that Goa has changed for the worse. The spread of serious drug use among locals, overdevelopment and environmental damage, and Goa's growing reputation within India as a place for bad behaviour are the dark underbelly to its tropical paradise. You can help repair Goa's image by following a few simple steps:

- » Away from the beaches, adopt the same, more modest dress that you would in other parts of the country. This generally means shoulders and knees covered, and keeping your shirts on. Nude or topless sunbathing was recently banned in Goa and can result in fines.
- » Keep your naughtiest behaviour confined to appropriate venues. Partying into the night with illegal substances at a family guesthouse might disturb the owners, though they may not say anything.
- » Women should be cautious when partying; rape, sadly, is on the rise in Goa, and though we don't believe (as many do) that bikinis are to blame, it makes sense to be in control of your surroundings.

Panaji's also a natural base for exploring Goa's historic hinterland, and if the timing's right, the place to be for its many festivals, which include the street party that is **Sabado Gordo** on the Saturday before Lent, a mad-cap **Carnival**, and, in December, the **Feast of St Francis Xavier** and the **Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception**. If you happen to be here in November, Panaji is also host to the excellent **International Film Festival of India** (www.iffi.gov.in, www.iffigoa.org), India's largest and most glittering film festival. Panajimites know how to throw a festival – but they also know how to nap: the city mostly shuts down between 1pm and 3pm.

Sights & Activities

Panaji is a city of long, leisurely strolls, through the sleepy Portuguese-era Sao Tomé, Fontainhas and Altinho districts, for a spot of shopping on 18th June Rd, and down along the languid Mandovi River.

Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception CHURCH

Panaji's spiritual and geographical centre is its gleamingly picturesque main church, consecrated in 1541. When Panaji was little more than a sleepy fishing village, this place was the first port of call for sailors from Lisbon, who would clamber up here to thank their lucky stars for a safe crossing before continuing to Old Goa, the state's capital until the 19th century, further east up the river.

If your visit coincides with 8 December, be sure to call in for the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, which sees a special church service and a lively fair spilling away from the church to mark the date.

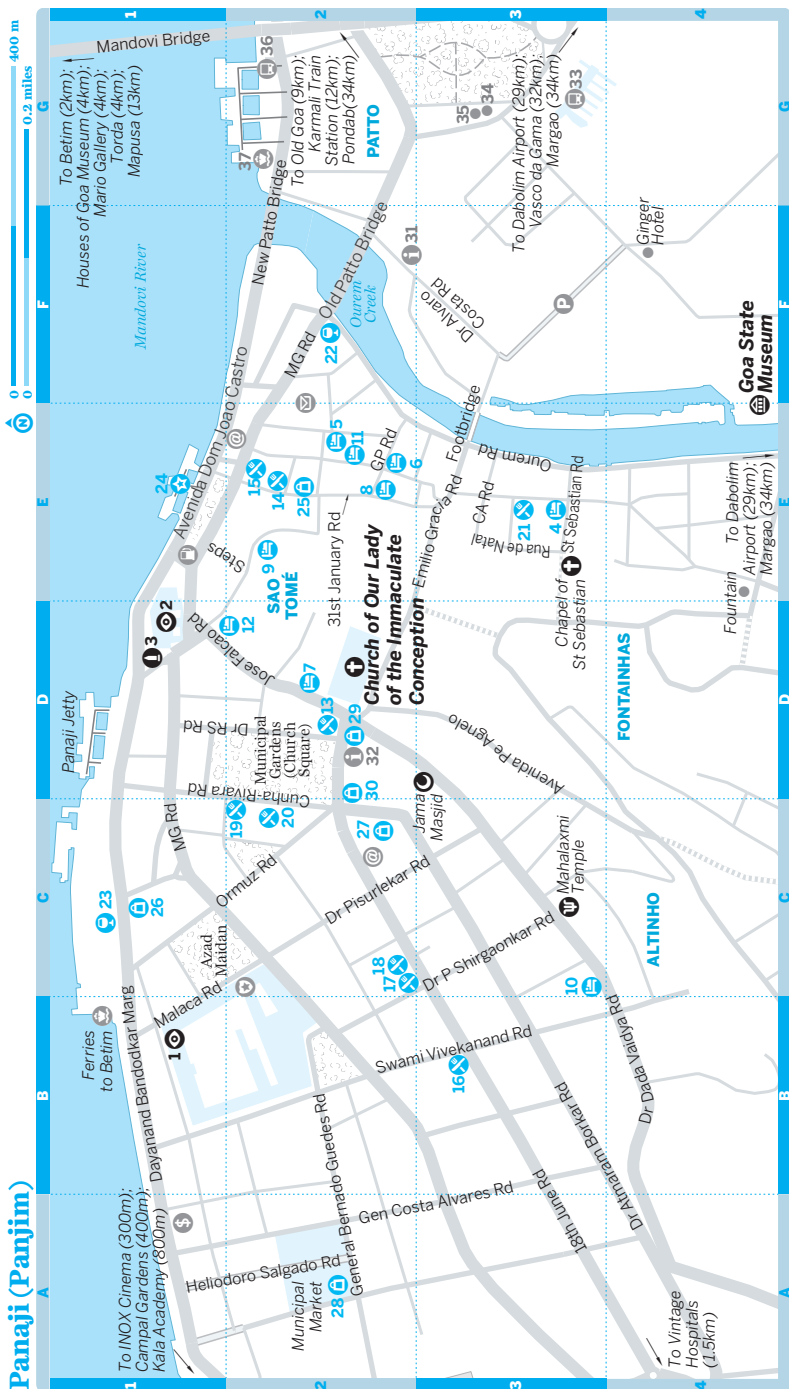
FREE Goa State Museum MUSEUM

(☎2438006; www.goamuseum.nic.in; EDC Complex, Patto; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) This large museum, in a strangely uncentral area southwest of the Kadamba bus stand, has a sleepy feel and an intriguing hodgepodge of exhibits. In addition to the usual Hindu and Jain sculptures and bronzes, the museum has a good collection of wooden Christian sculptures, a room devoted to the history of print in Goa (replete with hulking, old-school presses), an exhibition on Goa's freedom fighters, and a few nice examples of Portuguese-era furniture, including an elaborately carved table used during the notoriously brutal Portuguese Inquisition in Goa.

Houses of Goa Museum MUSEUM

(☎2411276; Torda; adult/child ₹100/25; ☉10.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) This little museum was created by a well-known local architect, Gerard da Cunha, to illuminate the history of Goan architecture. Interesting displays on building practices and European and local design will change the way you see those old Goan homes, apparent statewide in various states of glory and decrepitude. Next door is the **Mario Gallery** (☎2410711; admission free; ☉10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), with works by one of India's favourite cartoonists, Mario Miranda. The museum and gallery are north of Panaji in the Torda neighbourhood. To get here, take a Mapusa-bound bus and get off at Okukora Circle, also known as Kokeru; a rickshaw from here and back, including waiting time, costs ₹100. From Panaji, a taxi or rickshaw will cost you about ₹300 one-way.

Panaji (Panjim)



Panaji (Panjim)

📍 Top Sights

- Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception D2
- Goa State Museum.....E4

📍 Sights

- 1 Menezes Braganza Institute.....B1
- Panaji Central Library(see 1)
- 2 Secretariat Building.....D1
- 3 Statue of Abbé Faria.....D1

Activities, Courses & Tours

- River Cruises..... (see 37)

🛏 Sleeping

- 4 Afonso Guest HouseE3
- 5 Bharat LodgeE2
- Casa Morada..... (see 6)
- 6 Casa NovaE2
- 7 Casa ParadisoD2
- 8 Comfort Guest HouseE2
- 9 CrownE2
- 10 Mayfair HotelC3
- 11 Pousada Guest House.....E2
- 12 Republica HotelD2

🍴 Eating

- 13 George Bar & Restaurant.....D2
- 14 Hospedaria Venite.....E2
- 15 Hotel ViharE2
- 16 Legacy of Bombay.....B3
- 17 Satkar Vegetarian Restaurant.....C2
- 18 Sher-E-PunjabC2

- 19 Sher-E-PunjabC2
- 20 Upper House.....C2
- 21 Viva PanjimE3

🍷 Drinking

- 22 Down the RoadF2
- 23 QuarterdeckC1

🎮 Entertainment

- 24 Casino Royale.....E1

🛍 Shopping

- 25 BarefootE2
- 26 Book FairC1
- 27 Khadi Gramodyog BhavanC2
- 28 Municipal Market.....A2
- 29 Singbal's Book HouseD2
- 30 Vision World Book Depot.....D2

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- 31 Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC)F2
- 32 IndiatourismD2

Transport

- 33 Kadamba Bus StandG3
- Konkan Railway Reservation Office (see 33)
- 34 Paulo TravelsG3
- 35 Private Bus Agents.....G3
- 36 Private Bus StandG2
- 37 Santa Monica JettyG2

Secretariat Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Avenida Dom Joao Castro) This colonial-era building is on the site of Bijapur Sultan Yusef Adil Shah's summer palace. The current structure dates from the 16th century and became the Portuguese viceroy's official residence in 1759. Nowadays it houses less exciting government offices but is worth a gaze as the oldest, and one of the prettiest, buildings in town, though it may still be under renovation when you visit. Immediately to the west, the compelling **statue** of a man bearing down upon a supine female form depicts Abbé Faria, a Goan priest, 'father of hypnotism' and friend of Napoleon, in melodramatic throes.

Menezes Braganza Institute

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Malaca Rd) This beautiful early 20th-century affair is worth dropping into to see the pretty blue-and-white *azulejos* (glazed ceramic-tile compositions) in the entrance hall. The

Panaji Central Library (☎9.30am-1.15pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat) is a pleasantly retro place to read the paper and some magazines.

Campal

AREA

The Campal neighbourhood, to the west of Panaji proper, is home to some green spaces that are perfect for whiling away an afternoon. Goa's premier cultural centre, **Kala Academy** has a lovely campus, with a snack bar; an art gallery; a lighthouse, pier and benches along the water; and a library with great books on Indian arts. East of this is **Campal Gardens** (Bhagwan Mahaveer Bal Vihar), a peaceful, expansive park with playgrounds and river views.

🎓 Courses

Holiday on the Menu

COOKING

(www.holidayonthemenu.com; courses from US\$149) This London-based outfit offers a

variety of Goan-cooking holidays, ranging from a Saturday 'Curry Morning' to a one-week program that includes trips to a spice plantation and a local market, based in the picturesque village of Betim, just across the river north of town.

Tours

The Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) operates a range of boat trips along the Mandovi River, including daily hour-long **cruises** (₹150; ☀6pm & 7.15pm) and two-hour **dinner cruises** (₹450; ☀8.45pm) aboard the *Santa Monica*. All include a live band and dancers – sometimes lively, sometimes lacklustre – performing Goan folk songs and dances. Cruises depart from the Santa Monica jetty beside the New Patto Bridge, where the **GTDC boat counter** (☎2437496) also sells tickets.

Three private companies also offer one-hour **night cruises** (adult/child ₹150/free; ☀6pm, 7pm & 8.30pm) departing from Santa Monica jetty. The GTDC cruises are a little more staid, while others – maybe because of the bars and DJs – can get rowdy with groups of local male tourists.

GTDC also runs a two-hour **Goa By Night bus tour** (₹200; ☀6.30pm Tue & Sun), which leaves from the same jetty and includes a river cruise and packs in as much as possible.

You can take your own free tour aboard the local ferries that depart frequently (whenever full) at the dock next to Quarterdeck; locals have reported seeing dolphins on evening rides. Avoid rush hour, when the boats are crammed.

Sleeping

As in the rest of Goa, prices vary wildly in Panaji depending on supply and demand. Lots of rock-bottom-priced options pepper 31st January Rd, but most consist of a cell-like room, with a 9am checkout, for ₹500 or less. Inspect a few before you decide. Some are full of bachelors where it would be odd – and potentially problematic – for gals to stay, so if unsure, ask at reception if the hotel is a 'family' place.



Mayfair Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2223317; Dr Dada Vaidya Rd; s/d from ₹900/1200; ☎) Bright rooms at this friendly family-run hotel have mango-yellow accents, woodblock-print curtains and either balconies on the street side or windows overlooking the backyard garden (think palms, flowers and cats

chasing butterflies). Beautiful ground-floor oyster-shell windows and good old-fashioned service make it atmospheric, too, and loving details like balcony lanterns at Diwali time make it feel homey. Be sure to get recommendations from the chatty mother and daughters at reception, and check out the fun Mario Miranda mosaic in the lobby. Discounts are given for stays of more than two nights.

Casa Nova

GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$

(☎9423889181, 7709886212; www.goaholidayaccommodation.com; Gomes Pereira Rd; ste ₹3100)

Here's your chance to actually stay in one of Panaji's gorgeous old Portuguese-style homes – if you can get a booking. Casa Nova consists of just one stylish, exceptionally comfy suite, accessed via a little alley and complete with arched windows, wood-beam ceilings and mod cons like a kitchenette. Sister property **Casa Morada** (☎9822196007, 9881966789; agomes@tbi.in; Gomes Pereira Rd; s/d incl breakfast ₹5000/10,000) is as fancy as Nova is modern. Its two bedrooms and sitting room are full of antique furniture and objets d'art (ergo the no children, no pets policy), with real art on the walls and floors of elegant pale-green marble.

Crown

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2400060; www.thecrowngo.com; Jose Falcao Rd; d/ste incl breakfast from ₹5000/10,000; ☎@☎☎)

Perched high above Panaji, with lovely views from its cool and peaceful pool area, this is a great option for a little bit of luxury in the midst of the city. The Crown was recently renovated, and the result is airy, tastefully done rooms in mustards and whites (some with balconies) with supermodern bathrooms. The staff is competent without being stuffy. The price includes breakfast and, for stays of more than two nights, pick-up/drop-off at the airport or train station.

Afonso Guest House

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2222359, 9764300165; St Sebastian Rd; r ₹1500) Run by the friendly Jeanette, this place in a pretty, old Portuguese-era town house offers spacious, well-kept rooms with wood-plank ceilings and a pinch of character. The little rooftop terrace, meanwhile, makes for sunny breakfasting (dishes from ₹20 to ₹30). It's a simple, serene stay in the heart of the most atmospheric part of town with just two small faults: checkout is 9am and it doesn't take bookings.

Pousada Guest House

HOTEL \$

(☎24222618; sabinrateles@yahoo.com; Luis de Menezes Rd; d/tr/f ₹420/735/900, with AC

₹630/840/1000; 🍷) The four rooms in this little place in the centre of town are nothing special – the two doubles are downstairs, dark and a little small even – but they're clean; civilised; owner Sabrina is friendly and no-nonsense; and of course, the price is right.

Republica Hotel

HOTEL \$

(📍2224630; Jose Falcao Rd; s/d from ₹400/700, d with AC ₹1000; 🍷) The Republica is a story of unexplored potential, an architectural beauty that's been left to the elements – though its dilapidation is, in part, its charm. We thought the welcome could be warmer; and the rooms, though a bit worn, are pricey, but the elderly, ramshackle wooden building has balconies railed with ornate wrought-iron banisters, some rooms have three walls of stained glass, and the air hangs heavy with *saudade* and faded grandeur.

Casa Paradiso

HOTEL \$\$

(📍2230092; www.casaparisogoa.com; Jose Falcao Rd; r ₹2000-2500; 🍷) Just steps away from Panaji's Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the newish Casa is a central, if a tad overpriced, option with friendly staff and bright rooms.

Bharat Lodge

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(📍2224862, 9890193688; Sao Tomé St; d with-out/with AC ₹1000/1600; 🍷) A good, clean option in a pretty, recently renovated old building. Rooms have TVs, but could be cheaper.

Comfort Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(📍6642250; 31st January Rd; r ₹500) Wasn't yet open at research time, but we heard good things about it.



Eating

You'll never go hungry in Panaji, where food is enjoyed fully and frequently. A stroll down 18th June or 31st January Rds will turn up a number of great, cheap canteen-style options, as will a quick circuit of the Municipal Gardens.



Upper House

GOAN \$\$

(Cunha-Rivara Rd; mains ₹95-295; 🕒11am-10pm) Fans of Goan seafood *and* vegetarians alike can rejoice in the food at this new spot specialising in home-style regional dishes. Local favourites such as crab *cec cec* (crab cooked in a roasted-coconut gravy), pork vindaloo, and fish-curry-rice are done the old-fashioned way (the latter even comes with salt-water mango pickle, rarely found outside

Goan mothers' kitchens), and even the veg adaptations (eg mixed veg and mushroom *xacuti*) are show-stoppers. Upper House also serves the best *pav* (Portuguese-style bread) you've ever tasted, while the *alebale* dessert (pancake stuffed with jaggery and coconut) might make you wet your pants it's so good. The restaurant's on the 1st floor of the building next to Hindu Pharmacy.

Sher-E-Punjab

NORTH INDIAN \$\$

(18th June Rd; mains ₹70-140; 🕒10.30am-11.30pm) A cut above the usual lunch joint, Sher-E-Punjab caters to well-dressed locals with its generous, carefully spiced Punjabi dishes: even a humble *mattar paneer* (unfermented cheese and pea curry) is memorable here. There's a pleasant garden terrace out back, too, open seasonally. The food at the fancier branch of **Sher-E-Punjab** (Hotel Aroma, Cunha-Rivara Rd; mains ₹120-270; 🕒11am-3pm & 7-10.30pm) is equally tasty.

George Bar & Restaurant

GOAN \$\$

(Church Sq; mains ₹75-160; 🕒9.30am-10.30pm) Slightly cramped wooden tables and a healthy mix of drunks and families make for a good local, down-to-earth vibe. Seafood's the name of the game here, and it's done especially well in *pilau* (rice cooked in stock; often spelled *pulao* in Goa) and other Goan classics. George is also one of those rare birds in Goa that does good veg; try the biryani or the delish veg *pilau*.

Hotel Vihar

VEGAN \$

(MG Rd; mains ₹50-80, thalis ₹45-70; 🕒7.30am-10pm) A vast menu of 'pure veg' food, great big thalis and a plethora of fresh juices make this clean, simple canteen a popular place for locals and visitors alike. Sip a hot chai, invent your own juice combination, and dig into one of the fresh thalis or tiffins.

Viva Panjim

GOAN \$

(31st January Rd; mains ₹65-120; 🕒11am-3.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 7-10.30pm Sun) Though it's crazy touristy these days, this little side-street eatery, with a couple of tables out on the street itself, still delivers tasty Goan classics – there's a whole page of the menu devoted to pork dishes – as well as the standard Indian fare. Veggies, though, will leave disappointed.

Hospedaria Venite

GOAN \$\$

(31st January Rd; mains ₹180-260; 🕒9am-10.30pm) The atmospheric Venite is a long-time tourist favourite: its tiny, rickety balcony

tables make the perfect lunchtime spot. But perhaps success has gone to Venite's head: the food was never great, and now it's exorbitantly priced, too. Maybe visit for a cold beer or snack in the evening instead and chill out on the balcony before moving on.

Legacy of Bombay INDIAN \$\$
(Hotel Fidalgo, 18th June Rd; mains ₹90-150)
Slightly fancy, slightly pricey, really good pure-veg.

Satkar Vegetarian Restaurant INDIAN \$
(18th June Rd; thalis ₹55-70, mains ₹50-80)
Casual, cheap, pretty good pure-veg.



Drinking

Panaji's got pick-me-up pit stops aplenty, especially in Sao Tomé and Fontainhas. Mostly simple little bars with a few plastic tables and chairs, they're a great way to get chatting with locals.

Down the Road BAR
(MG Rd; ☺11am-2am) This restaurant's balcony overlooking the creek and Old Patto Bridge makes for a good and comfy cocktail spot. The ground-floor bar is also Panaji's only real late-nighter, with occasional live music.

Quarterdeck BAR
(Dayanand Bandodkar Marg; ☺11am-10.45pm)
The prices here are on the high side, but the spot right on the water makes up for that.



Entertainment

Kala Academy CULTURAL PROGRAMS
(☎2420451; www.kalaacademy.org; Dayanand Bandodkar Marg) On the west side of the city at Campal is Goa's premier cultural centre, which features an excellent program of dance, theatre, music and art exhibitions throughout the year. Many plays are in Konkani, but there are occasional English-language productions; call to find out what's on when you're in town.

INOX CINEMA
(☎2420999; www.inoxmovies.com; Old GMC Heritage Precinct; tickets ₹180-200) This comfortable multiplex cinema shows Hollywood and Bollywood blockbusters alike; films change on Fridays.

Casino boats ply the Mandovi waters each night, offering lose-your-savings fun to all who step aboard. **Casino Royale** (☎6519471/2; www.casinoroyalegoa.com; entry

₹3500; ☺6pm-8am) is the largest; various age and dress restrictions apply.



Shopping

Panaji's **municipal market** is a great place for people-watching and buying necessities.

Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan HANDICRAFTS
(Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd; ☺9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Goa's only outpost of the government's Khadi & Village Industries Commission has an excellent range of hand-woven cottons (the towels and men's kurtas are particularly good), along with oils, soaps, spices and other handmade products that come straight from – and directly benefit – regional villages.

Barefoot HANDICRAFTS
(31st January Rd; ☺10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Barefoot is part of Panaji's new wave of very high end shops specialising in design of one kind or another. Barefoot, though pricey, has some nice gifts, ranging from traditional Christian paintings on wood to jewellery to beaded coasters.

Panaji has several good bookstores, all with a range of books on Goa and the region.

Book Fair BOOKSTORE
(Hotel Mandovi, Dayanand Bandodkar Marg; ☺9am-9pm) A small, well-stocked bookstore in the Hotel Mandovi lobby; you'll find *Fish Curry & Rice*, the Goa Foundation's environmental sourcebook, here (see p811).

Singbal's Book House BOOKSTORE
(Church Sq; ☺9.30am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Lots of books and newspapers and heaps of character at this slightly grumpy establishment that, incidentally, had a cameo role in the *Bourne Supremacy*.

Vision World Book Depot BOOKSTORE
(Church Sq; ☺9.30am-8pm) A good selection of self-help and spiritual titles, among other things.



Information

ATMs are everywhere, especially on 18th June Rd and around the Thomas Cook office.

Cozy Nook Travels (18th June Rd; per hr ₹35; ☺9am-9pm) Superfriendly internet joint, with a quiet ISD booth.

Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC; ☎2424001/2/3; www.goa-tourism.com; Dr Alvaro Costa Rd; ☺9.30am-1.15pm & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat) Pick up maps of Goa and Panaji here and book one of GTDC's host of tours.

Indiatourism (Government of India tourist office; ☎2223412; www.incredibleindia.com; 1st fl, Comunidade Bldg, Church Sq; ☀9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) Helpful staff can provide a list of qualified guides for tours and trips in Goa. A half-/full-day tour for up to five people costs ₹600/750.

Main post office (MG Rd; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

Oliveira Fernandes & Sons Business Centre (MG Rd; per hr ₹30; ☀9am-midnight) Best internet cafe with the best name.

Thomas Cook (☎2221312; Dayanand Bhandokar Marg; ☀9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Changes travellers cheques commission-free and handles currency exchange, wire transfers, cash advances on credit cards, and air bookings.

Vintage Hospitals (☎6644401-05, ambulance 2232533; www.vintage3.com; Cacula Enclave, St Inez) A couple of kilometres southwest of Panaji, Vintage is a reputable hospital with all the fixings.

i Getting There & Away

AIR A taxi from Panaji to Dabolim Airport takes about an hour, and costs ₹500.

BUS All government buses depart from the **Kadamba bus stand** (☎local enquiries 2438034), with local services heading out every few minutes. To get to South Goan beaches, take a bus to Margao and change there; Ponda buses also stop at Old Goa.

Calangute ₹14, 45 minutes

Candolim ₹12, 30 minutes

Mapusa ₹10, 20 minutes

Margao express; ₹26, 45 minutes

Old Goa ₹8, 15 minutes

State-run long-distance services also depart from the **Kadamba bus stand** (☎interstate enquiries 2438035; ☀reservations 8am-8pm). Private operators have booths outside Kadamba, but the buses depart from the interstate bus stand next to New Patto Bridge. One reliable company is **Paulo Travels** (☎2438531; www.paulotravels.com; Kardoza Bldg). Some high-season government and private long-distance fares:

Bengaluru ₹550-800, 15 hours, five daily

Bengaluru private; ₹800-1300, 14-15 hours

Hampi private; ₹700-800, 10-11 hours

Hubli ₹150, six hours, hourly

Mumbai private ₹600-1500, 12-14 hours

Pune ₹450, 11 hours, nine daily

Pune private; ₹700-1200, 10-11 hours

Kadamba station has an ATM, an internet cafe – and a Ganesh temple.

TRAIN Panaji's closest train station is Karmali (Old Goa), 12km to the east, where many

long-distance services stop. Panaji's **Konkan Railway reservation office** (☎2712940; ☀8am-8pm Mon-Sat) is on the 1st floor of the Kadamba bus stand. See p827 for details on trains out of Margao, many of which stop at Karmali.

i Getting Around

It's easy enough to get around Panaji on foot, and it's unlikely you'll even need a pilot or autorickshaw, which is good because they charge a lot: a rick from Kadamba to your hotel will cost ₹50. Frequent buses run between Kadamba and the municipal market (₹5).

To Old Goa, a taxi costs around ₹300, an autorickshaw ₹150. Lots of taxis hang around the Municipal Gardens, while you'll find autorickshaws and pilots in front of the post office, on 18th June Rd, and just south of the church.

Old Goa

From the 16th to the 18th centuries, when Old Goa's population exceeded that of Lisbon or London, this capital of Goa was considered the 'Rome of the East'. You can still sense that grandeur as you wander the grounds, with its towering churches and cathedral and majestic convents. Its rise under the Portuguese, from 1510, was meteoric, but cholera and malaria outbreaks forced the abandonment of the city in the 1600s. In 1843 the capital was officially shifted to Panaji.

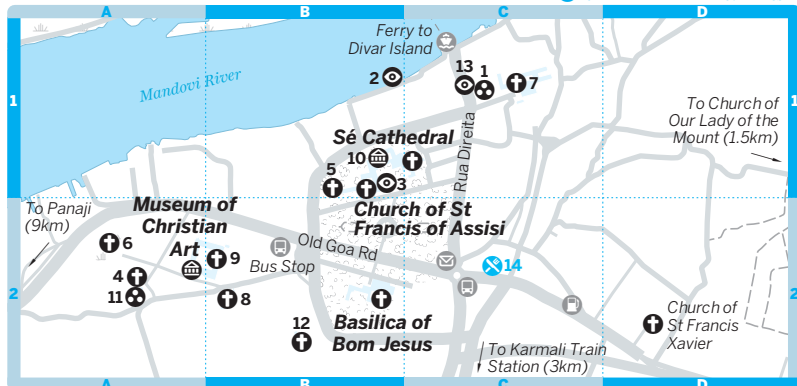
Some of the churches, the cathedral and a convent or two are still in use, but many of the other historical buildings have become museums. It's a fascinating day trip, but it can get crowded: consider visiting on a weekday morning, when you can take in Mass at Sé Cathedral or the Basilica of Bom Jesus (remember to cover your shoulders and legs in the churches and cathedral), and definitely stop by if you're around in the 10 days leading up to the **Feast of St Francis Xavier** on 3 December.

i Sights

Sé Cathedral

CHURCH

The largest church in Old Goa, the Sé de Santa Catarina, is also the largest in Asia, at over 76m long and 55m wide. Construction began in 1562, under orders from Portugal's King Dom Sebastião, and the finishing touches were made 90 years later. Fairly plain all-round, the cathedral has three especially notable features: the first, up in the belfry, is the **Golden Bell**, the largest bell in Asia; the second is in the screened chapel inside



to the right, known as the **Chapel of the Cross of Miracles**, wherein sits a cross said to have miraculously, and vastly, expanded in size after its creation by local shepherds in 1619. The third is the massive gilded reredos (ornamental screen behind the altar), which depicts the life of St Catherine, to whom the cathedral is dedicated and who came to a sticky end in Alexandria, Egypt, where she was beheaded.

Next to the cathedral, in the old archbishop's house, **Kristu Kala Mandir Art Gallery** (admission ₹10; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) has a hodgepodge of contemporary Christian art and religious objects, including old church confessionals and altar pieces. The decorative wall frescoes may be the gallery's prettiest holdings.

Church of St Francis of Assisi CHURCH

The gorgeous interior of this 1661 church, built over a 16th-century chapel, is filled with gilded and carved woodwork, murals depicting the life of St Francis, frescoes of decorative flowers and various angels, 16th-century Portuguese tombstones, and another stunning reredos.

Just behind the church, the former convent houses the **Archaeological Museum** (admission ₹10; ☎8am-5pm), whose small but worthwhile collection includes a portrait gallery of Portuguese viceroys, a couple of bronze statues, fragments of Hindu temple sculpture, and some interesting 'hero stones', carved to commemorate Hindu warriors who perished in combat.

TOP CHOICE **Museum of Christian Art** MUSEUM
 (http://christianartmuseum.goa-india.org; adult/
 child ₹30/free; ☎9.30am-5pm) This excellent

museum, in a positively stunning space in the restored 1627 **Convent of St Monica**, has a fine collection of 16th- and 17th-century Christian art from Old Goa and around the state. There are some exquisite pieces here – wooden sculptures glittering with gilt and polychrome, processional lamps, tabernacle doors, polychrome paintings and other religious objects from Old Goa's prime – that are almost, but not quite, outdone by the atmospheric interior. The four-storey-high ceilings, exposed wood beams and terracotta-work, and all-around beauty of the place are worth a visit in their own right.

Basilica of Bom Jesus CHURCH

Famous throughout the Roman Catholic world for its rather grizzled and grizzly long-term resident, the basilica's vast, gilded interior forms the last resting place of Goa's patron saint, St Francis Xavier (except for his diamond-encrusted fingernail, which sits in Chandor). In 1541, the saint embarked on a mission to put right the sinful, heady lifestyles of Goa's Portuguese colonials. Construction of the imposing red-stone basilica was completed in 1605; St Francis himself is housed in a **mausoleum** to the right, in a glass-sided coffin amid a shower of gilt stars.

Church of Our Lady of the Mount CHURCH

For a wonderful view of the city hike up to this hilltop church, also known as **Capela de Monte**, 2km east of Sé Cathedral; it's especially worth the trip for a spectacular sunset. (Locals will warn you not to go solo; the site is a bit remote.) The church is rarely open but was recently restored and, with its exceptional acoustics, now hosts concerts

Old Goa

🕒 Top Sights

Basilica of Bom Jesus	B2
Church of St Francis of Assisi	B1
Museum of Christian Art.....	A2
Sé Cathedral	C1

🕒 Sights

1 Adil Shah Palace Gateway	C1
2 Albuquerque's Steps.....	B1
3 Archaeological Museum	B1
4 Chapel of St Anthony	A2
5 Chapel of St Catherine.....	B1

6 Church of Our Lady of the Rosary	A2
7 Church of St Cajetan.....	C1
8 Convent & Church of St John.....	B2
9 Convent of St Monica	B2
10 Kristu Kala Mandir Art Gallery	B1
11 Monastery of St Augustine.....	A2
12 Sisters' Convent.....	B2
13 Viceroy's Arch	C1

🍴 Eating

14 Sanjay Cafe.....	C2
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during the Feast of St Francis Xavier in December, the Monte Music Festival in February, and at other times during the year.

Monastery of St Augustine HISTORIC SITE

The melancholy, evocative ruins of this once vast and impressive Augustinian monastery are all that remain of a huge structure founded in 1572 and abandoned in 1835. The building's facade came tumbling down in 1942; all that remains, amid piles of rubble, is the towering skeletal belfry, though the bell itself was rescued and now hangs in Panaji's Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

There are plenty of other monuments in Old Goa to explore, including the **Church of St Cajetan**, **Viceroy's Arch**, **Adil Shah Palace Gateway**, **Chapel of St Anthony**, **Chapel of St Catherine**, **Albuquerque's Steps**, the **Convent & Church of St John**, **Sisters' Convent** and the **Church of Our Lady of the Rosary**.

🍴 Eating

Little tourist restaurants with chai and snacks are peppered around; the basic **Sanjay Cafe** (Old Goa Rd; thalis ₹35, tiffins ₹25-30) has the best food in town.

📍 Getting There & Away

Frequent buses from Old Goa head to Panaji's Kadamba bus stand (₹8, 25 minutes) from Old Goa Rd, just beside the Tourist Inn and at the main roundabout to the east.

Ponda & Around

The workaday inland town of Ponda, 29km southeast of Panaji, has two big drawcards in the vicinity – Hindu temples and spice

plantations – and is worth a day away from the beach. Temple aficionados, however, might be a little disappointed; most were built or rebuilt after the originals were destroyed by the Portuguese, so they're not as ancient as those elsewhere in India.

The 18th-century hilltop **Mangueshi Temple** at Priol, 5km northwest of Ponda, is dedicated to Manguesh, a god known only in Goa, while 1km away at Mardol is the **Mahalsa Temple**, also dedicated to a specifically Goan deity. The 1738 **Shantadurga Temple**, meanwhile, just west of Ponda, is dedicated to Shantadurga, the goddess of peace, and is one of the most famous shrines in Goa.

The **Tropical Spice Plantation** (📍2340329; www.tropicalspiceplantation.com; admission incl lunch ₹400; ☀9am-4pm), 5km northeast of Ponda, is touristy, but you'll get an entertaining 45-minute tour of the 120-acre plantation's 'demo garden' followed by a buffet lunch. Elephant rides and bathings are available for ₹600, but seeing the elephants uncomfortably tied on short leashes all day may make this part less appealing. **Sahakari Spice Farm** (📍2312394; www.sahakarifarms.com; admission incl lunch ₹400; ☀9am-4pm), 2km from Ponda, is practically the same thing.

Nearby, the 200-year-old family **Savoio Plantation** (📍2340272, 9423888899; www.savoioplantation.com; ☀9am-4.30pm), whose motto is 'Organic Since Origin', is much mellower, less touristed and elephant-free. You'll find a warm welcome from knowledgeable guides keen to walk you through the 100-acre plantation at your own pace. Local crafts are for sale, and you're welcomed with fresh *kokum* juice, cardamom bananas and other organic treats. Savoio also recently built a couple of **cottages** (d incl meals ₹5000).

There are regular buses to Ponda from Panaji (₹18, 45 minutes) and Margao, after which you'll need to arrange a taxi to visit the temples or spice farms. Taxis from Panaji charge ₹1000 for a day trip to the area (up to eight hours and 80km).

Dudhsagar Falls

On the eastern border with Karnataka, Dudhsagar Falls (603m) are Goa's most impressive waterfalls, and the second highest in India, best seen as soon as possible after the rains. To get here, take the 8.13am train to Colem from Margao (check return times in advance; there are only three trains daily in each direction), and from there, catch a jeep for the bumpy 40-minute trip to the falls (₹300 return per person, or ₹1800 for the six-passenger jeep). It's then a short but rocky clamber to the edge of the falls themselves. A simpler, but more expensive, option is to take a full-day **GTDC tour** (₹700; ☀9am-6pm Wed & Sun) from Panaji, Mapusa or Calangute (book at the office in Panaji), or arrange an excursion with the Day Tripper travel agency in Calangute or Speedy Travels in Anjuna.

NORTH GOA

Mapusa

POP 40,100

The pleasantly bustling market town of Mapusa (pronounced 'Mapsa') is the largest town in northern Goa, and is most often visited for its busy **Friday Market** (☀8am-

6.30pm), which attracts scores of buyers and sellers from neighbouring towns and villages, and a healthy intake of tourists from the northern beaches. It's a good place to pick up the usual embroidered bedsheets and the like at prices lower than in the beach resorts. You'll probably pass through Mapusa eventually anyway, as it's a major transport hub for northern Goa buses.

Mapusa is also home to the exceptionally awesome **Other India Bookstore** (☎2263306; www.otherindiabookstore.com; Mapusa Clinic Rd; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), specialising in 'dissenting wisdom' – a small but spectacular selection of books on nature, farming, politics, education and natural health. To find it, go up the steps on the right as you walk down Mapusa Clinic Rd, and follow signs; it's at the end of a dingy corridor.

There's little reason to stay the night in Mapusa when the beaches of the north coast are all so close, but if you do, go for **Hotel Vileña** (☎2263115; Feira Baixa Rd; d without/with AC ₹525/725, without bathroom ₹420; ☹). There are plenty of nice, old-fashioned cafes within the market area. The thalis are excellent at busy **Ashok Snacks & Beverages** (thalis & mains ₹35-70; ☀6am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun), overlooking the market. It's a simple place full of local families and folks on their lunch break. **Hotel Vrundavan** (thalis ₹38-55, tiffins ₹12-50; ☀7am-10pm Wed-Mon), an all-veg place bordering the municipal gardens, is another great joint with good chai and snacks.

i Information

There are plenty of ATMs scattered about town.

Mapusa Clinic (☎2263343; ☀consultations 10.30am-1.30pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-7pm Mon, Wed & Fri) A well-run medical clinic, with 24-hour

WORTH A TRIP

BACKWOODS CAMP

In a forest in the Mahaveer Sanctuary full of butterflies and birds, **Backwoods Camp** (☎9822139859; www.backwoodsgoa.com) could not be in a more magical, serene spot. The resort is about 1km from Tambdi Surla temple, and for birdwatching enthusiasts it offers one of Goa's richest sources of feathered friends, with everything from Ceylon frogmouths and Asian fairy bluebirds to puff-throated babblers and Indian pittas putting in a regular appearance. Accommodation is in comfortable tents on raised platforms, bungalows and farmhouse rooms (all with attached bathroom), and the camp makes valiant attempts to protect this fragile bit of the Goan ecosystem through measures including waste recycling, replanting indigenous tree species and employing local villagers. One-, two- and three-day birdwatching excursions, including guide, transport from Ponda, accommodation at the camp and all meals, cost from ₹4000, ₹6000 and ₹8000 per person, respectively.

GREEN GOA?

Goa's environment has suffered from an onslaught of tourism over the last 40 years, but also from the effects of logging, mining and local customs (rare turtle eggs have traditionally been considered a dining delicacy). Construction proceeds regardless of what the local infrastructure or ecosystem can sustain, while plastic bottles pile up in vast mountains. There are, however, a few easy ways to minimise your impact on Goa's environment:

- » Take your own bag when shopping and refill water bottles with filtered water wherever possible. The 5L Bisleri water bottles come with a deposit and are returnable to be reused; invest in these when you can. Better yet, bring a water filter with you.
- » Rent a bicycle instead of a scooter, and ask around if you don't find any: bicycle rentals are declining as a result of our scooter infatuation, but they'll bounce back if the demand is there.
- » Dispose of cigarette butts, which are nonbiodegradable, in bins; birds and sealife may mistake them for food and choke.

Turtles are currently protected by the **Forest Department** (www.goaforest.com), which operates huts on beaches, such as Agonda, where turtles arrive to lay eggs. Drop into these or check out the website to find out more about the department's work. Also doing good work is the **Goa Foundation** (☎2256479, 2263305; www.goafoundation.org; St Britto's Apts, G-8 Feira Alta, Mapusa), the state's main environmental pressure group. It has spearheaded a number of conservation projects since its inauguration in 1986, and its website is a great place to learn more about Goan environmental issues. The group's excellent *Fish Curry & Rice* (₹400), a sourcebook on Goa's environment and lifestyle, is sold at Mapusa's Other India Bookstore. The Foundation occasionally runs volunteer projects; call or swing by for details.

emergency services. Be sure to go to the 'new' Mapusa Clinic, behind the 'old' one.

Pink Panther Travel Agency (☎2250352, 2263180; panther_goa@sancharnet.in; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat) Train and air tickets (both international and domestic), currency exchange and property consultancy services.

Softway (☎2262075; per hr ₹20; Chandranath Apts; ☎9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9.30pm Sun) Fast internet and ice cream in a shopping complex just past the post office (opposite the police station).

📍 Getting There & Away

If you're coming to Goa by bus from Mumbai, Mapusa's **Kadamba bus stand** (☎2232161) is the jumping-off point for the northern beaches. Local services run every few minutes; just look for the correct destination on the sign in the bus windscreen – and try to get an express. For buses to the southern beaches, take a bus to Panaji, then Margao, and change there.

Local services:

Anjuna ₹10, 20 minutes

Arambol ₹20, 1½ hours

Calangute/Candolim ₹10/12, 20/35 minutes

Panjim ₹10, 20 minutes

Thivim ₹10, 20 minutes

Interstate services run out of the same lot, but private operators have their offices next to the bus stand. There's generally little difference in price, comfort or duration between private services.

Long-distance services:

Bengaluru government; ₹500, 12 hours, one daily at 5pm

Bengaluru private; non-AC ₹1500, AC ₹1600-2000

Mumbai private; non-AC ₹1500, AC ₹1600-2000

Pune government; non-AC ₹380-500, AC ₹600, three daily, in evening

Pune private; non-AC ₹1200, AC ₹1200-1500

There's a prepaid taxi stand outside the bus terminal; it has a handy sign of prices. Cabs to Anjuna or Calangute cost ₹200, Arambol ₹400, and Margao ₹800; autorickshaws typically charge ₹50 less than taxis.

Thivim, about 12km northeast of town, is the nearest train station on the Konkan Railway. Local buses meet trains; an autorickshaw into Mapusa from Thivim costs around ₹150.

Candolim, Sinquerim & Fort Aguada

POP 8600

Candolim's vast beach, which curves round as far as smaller Sinquerim beach in the south, is largely the preserve of older, slow-roasting package tourists from the UK, Russia and Scandinavia, and is fringed with beach shacks, all offering sun beds and shade in exchange for your custom. Its best-known feature, though, may be the hulking *River Princess* tanker which ran aground here in the late 1990s. This massive industrial creature, marooned just a few dozen metres offshore, with tourists sunbathing in her sullen shadow, is a surreal, and oddly pretty, sight.

Candolim's beach is pleasant, the town is mellow, and there are some great hotels here, but it's somewhat fading and lacks the personality of many other beach towns. The post office, supermarkets, travel agents, internet cafes, pharmacies and plenty of banks with ATMs are all on the main Fort Aguada Rd, which runs parallel to the beach.

Sights & Activities

Fort Aguada

FORT, AREA

(☉8.30am-5.30pm) Guarding the mouth of the Mandovi River and hugely popular with Indian tour groups, Fort Aguada was constructed by the Portuguese in 1612 and is the most impressive of Goa's remaining forts. It's worth braving the crowds and hawkers at the moated ruins on the hilltop for the views; unfortunately, there was no entry at research time to the fort's four-storey **Portuguese lighthouse**, built in 1894 and the oldest of its type in Asia. But just down the road is the peninsula's active **lighthouse** (Indian/foreigner/child ₹10/25/3; ☉3-5.30pm), which you can climb for extraordinary views. It's a pleasant 2km ride along a hilly, sealed road to the fort, or you can walk via a steep, uphill path past Marbella Guest House. Beneath the fort is the **Fort Aguada Jail**, whose cells were originally fort storehouses, and **Johnny's Mansion**, owned by a famously wealthy Goan and often used as a set for Indian films. Neither is open to the public.

Calizz

MUSEUM

(☎3250000; www.calizz.com; Fort Aguada Rd; adult/child ₹300/free; ☉10am-7pm) A highlight of Candolim, this impressive compound is filled with traditional Goan houses and

some 75,000 artefacts. The museum won a National Tourism Award for its innovativeness, but it's the pretty houses that will blow you away. Resident historians conduct 45-minute tours that bring the state's cultural history to life.

Boat Cruises

BOATING

Some of the most popular boat trips around town are run by **John's Boat Tours** (☎6520190, 9822182814; www.johnboattrips.com), including dolphin-watching cruises (₹900), boat trips to Anjuna Market (₹600), a Grand Island snorkelling excursion (₹1200), and even overnight houseboat cruises (₹5000 per person, full board). For something more low-key (read: cheaper), head to the **excursion boat jetty** along the Nerul River; independent local boat conductors here operate trips to Anjuna (₹300) and dolphin cruises (₹200; dolphins guaranteed) that pass by Coco Beach, Fort Aguada Jail, the fort, and – of course – 'Johnny's Millionaire House'.

Sleeping

Candolim has a surprising range of great accommodation. Most of the best-value (and cheapest) budget choices are in the lush area in northern Candolim between the road and the beach; wander through the tiny trails and you're sure to find something. The little road up to the Marbella Guest House also has private houses offering double rooms for around ₹500 per night.



Marbella Guest House

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2479551; www.marbellagoa.com; d/ste from ₹3000/4100; ☎) You might be put off by the name, but this place has not a touch of Spain's Costa del Sol about it. A stunning Portuguese-era villa filled with antiques and backed by a lush, peaceful courtyard garden, the Marbella is a romantic and sophisticated old-world remnant. Its kitchen serves up some imaginative dishes, and its penthouse suite is a dream of polished tiles and four-posters. Sadly for kids with a keen sense of style, no guests under 12 are permitted.

Beach Nest

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2489866; d ₹800-1000) Even the sand in the yard is swept tidily clean each day at this spotless and exceedingly friendly little place that's just a quick jungle-footpath walk to the beach. Upstairs rooms have balcony, kitchenettes and fridges, the owners are smiley and helpful, and the atmosphere's serene and homey.

D'Mello's Sea View Home

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2489650; dmellos_seaview_home@hotmail.com; d ₹1200-1800) Lovely breezy rooms are the principle attraction at D'Mello's, right at the edge of the beach. Rooms in the sea-facing building are divine, with only three walls: the fourth is your balcony, with huge, stunning views of the ocean. Even interior rooms are stylish, with perky colours and chic cotton bedspreads. All rooms are fastidiously clean and have mosquito nets, and the place is professionally (if a bit impersonally) run.

Villa Ludovici Tourist Home

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2479684; Fort Aguada Rd; d incl breakfast ₹1000) Well-worn, creaky rooms in a grand old Portuguese-style villa.

Candolim Villa Horizon View

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2489105; www.candolimvilla.com; d with AC ₹1500-2250; 🍷🍷🍷) Simple AC rooms are set around a small swimming pool at this friendly, professional place.

Vivanta by Taj

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎6645858; www.vivantabytaj.com; Sinquerim, r with AC from ₹10,000; 🍷🍷🍷) Upmarket Taj hotel.

**Eating & Drinking**

Candolim's plentiful beach shacks are popular places to eat; **Pete's Shack** (mains ₹90-230), on the northern end of the strip, may be the most elegant.

**Café Chocolatti**

CAFE, BAKERY \$\$

(Fort Aguada Rd; baked goods ₹40-100, mains ₹120-180; ☀9am-7pm Mon-Sat) When you're tired of thalis or simply seeking sanctuary, treat yourself at this lovely tearoom, set in a green garden light years from the bustle of the beach. The café serves sandwiches and salads, but the chocolate's the star. Order a slice of double-chocolate cake and sink back into cocoa heaven.

Stone House

MULTICUISINE, BAR \$\$

(Fort Aguada Rd; mains ₹90-300; ☀10am-3pm & 6pm-midnight) Surf 'n' turf's the thing at this venerable old Candolim venue, inhabiting a stone house and a leafy front courtyard. 'Swedish Lobster' cooked in beer tops the list, followed by other bold plates like flattened beef steak with mushroom and onion in spicy Goan sauce (₹250). There's quality live music most nights of the week.

Republic of Noodles

ASIAN FUSION \$\$\$

(Fort Aguada Rd; mains ₹375-450; ☀11am-3.30pm & 7-11pm) For a sophisticated dining experi-

ence, the RoN delivers with its dark bamboo interior, Buddha heads and floating candles. Delicious, huge noodle plates, wok stir-fries and clay-pot dishes are the order of the day – consider the coconut and turmeric curry of red snapper – and there are some exciting dishes for the veggies too.

Bob's Inn

MULTICUISINE, BAR \$\$

(Fort Aguada Rd; mains ₹90-200; ☀10.30am-4pm & 6.30pm-midnight) Great fish dishes, relaxed ambience and old dudes – foreigners and locals alike – chilling at the community table. The African wall hangings, thatch everywhere, and terracotta sculptures are a nice backdrop to the *rava* (semolina wheat) fried mussels or the prawns 'chilly fry' with potatoes.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses run frequently to Panaji (₹12, 30 minutes) and Mapusa (₹12, 35 minutes) and stop at the turn-off near John's Boat Tours. Calangute buses (₹5, 15 minutes) start at the Fort Aguada bus stop and can be flagged down on Fort Aguada Rd.

Calangute & Baga

POP 15,800

Once a refuge of wealthy Goans, and later a 1960s hot spot for naked, revelling hippies, Calangute today is popular with extended Indian families, groups of Indian bachelors and partying foreigners. If you want to experience authentic Indian (or Russian) tourism full-on, come to Calangute. The northern beach area can get crowded – including the water, which fills up with people, boats and jet skis – but the southern beach is more relaxed. Baga, to the north, meanwhile, is the place for drinking and dancing, and Northern Baga, across the Baga River, is surprisingly tranquil, with budget accommodation bargains clinging to the coast.

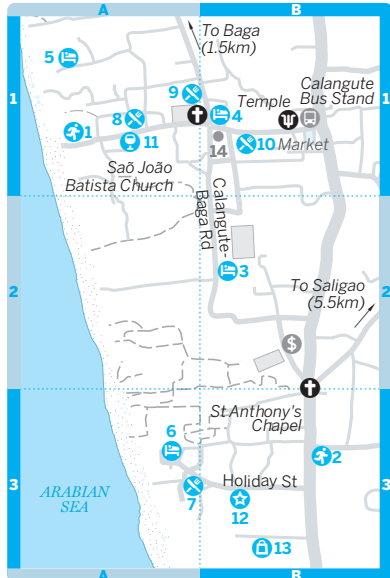
**Activities****Water Sports**

You'll find numerous jet-ski and parasailing operators on Calangute and Baga beaches; H2O Adventure is the most established. Parasailing costs around ₹600 per ride, jet-skiing costs ₹1000 per 15 minutes, and water-skiing can be had for about ₹1200 per 10 minutes.

Barracuda Diving

DIVING

(☎2279409-14, 9822182402; www.barracudadiving.com; Sun Village Resort, Baga; courses from ₹4000) This long-standing diving school



offers a range of dives and courses, including a free 'Try Scuba' family session every Monday. It's also exceptional for its 'Project A.W.A.R.E', which undertakes marine-conservation initiatives and annual underwater and beach clean-ups.

Yoga & Ayurveda

Ayurvedic Natural Health Centre

AYURVEDA, YOGA

(☎2409275; www.healthandayurveda.com; Chogm Rd, Saligao; massages from ₹1200; ☀7.30am-7.30pm) This highly respected centre, 5km inland, offers a range of massages and other ayurvedic treatments lasting from one hour to three weeks. Herbal medicines and consultations with an ayurvedic doctor are also available. For the more serious, professional courses are given here in ayurveda, yoga and other regimes; enquire well in advance. For the more spontaneous, drop-in yoga classes (₹300) are held daily. Some, but not all, buses from Baga/Calangute to Mapusa stop in Saligao, just near the centre; check before boarding.

Boat Trips

Local fishers congregate around northern Baga beach, offering dolphin-spotting trips (₹400 per person), visits to Anjuna Market (₹200 per person) and whole-day excursions

Calangute

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 1 Calangute Residency A1
- 2 Day Tripper B3

Sleeping

- 3 Casa de Goa B2
- 4 Garden Court Resort B1
- 5 Johnny's Hotel A1
- 6 Ospy's Shelter A3

Eating

- 7 A Reverie A3
- 8 Casandré A1
- 9 Infantaria A1
- 10 Plantain Leaf B1

Drinking

- 11 Jerry's Place A1

Entertainment

- 12 Kerkar Art Complex B3

Shopping

- 13 Literati Bookshop & Cafe B3

Information

- 14 MGM International Travels B1

to Arambol and Mandrem (₹1000 per person). Call friendly **Eugenio** (☎9226268531).

Tours

Day Tripper (☎2276726; www.daytrippergoa.com; Gaura Vaddo, Calangute; ☀9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat Nov-Apr), one of Goa's best tour agencies, runs a variety of trips around Goa, including two weekly to Dudhsagar Falls (₹1175) and another sailing through the mangroves of the Cumarjua River (₹1300), as well as longer trips.

GTDC tours can be booked online (www.goa-tourism.com) or at **Calangute Residency** (☎2276024), by the beach.

Sleeping

Calangute and Baga's sleeping options are manifold. Generally, the quietest hotels lie in south Calangute, and across the bridge north of Baga.

CALANGUTE

Casa de Goa

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2277777/9999; www.casadegoa.com; Tivai Vaddo; r/ste/cottages ₹5000/6000/7000; 📞@📧) The beautiful Casa de Goa is popular with Indian families and books up months in

advance – for good reason. Portuguese-style yellow-ochre buildings surround a pretty pool courtyard, decor is bright and fresh, and the big, clean rooms have safes, flatscreen TVs and new fridges, with other high-end and thoughtful touches. Cottages are across the street from the main hotel and may not get wi-fi.

Ospy's Shelter

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2279505; oscar_fernandes@sify.com; d ₹600-700) Tucked away in a quiet, lush little area full of palms and sandy paths between the beach and St Anthony's Chapel, are a bunch of family-run guesthouses. Ospy's, just a two-minute walk to the beach, is our favourite. Spotless upstairs rooms have fridges and balconies and look brand new even though they're not, and the whole place has a cosy family feel. Check out the gorgeous old floor tiles on the ground floor.

Johnny's Hotel

HOTEL \$

(☎2277458; s ₹400, d ₹600-900) Twelve basic rooms in this backpacker-popular place make for a sociable stay, with regular classes available in yoga, reiki and the tantalisingly titled 'metamorphic technique'. A range of apartments and houses are available for longer-stayers. Johnny's is also home to a popular cafe: stop in for baked beans on toast for

breakfast (₹100) or spice up lunchtime with a Goan 'veg vindaloo' (₹70).

Garden Court Resort

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2276054; luarba@dataone.in; r ₹500-600, with AC ₹700-800, 1-/2-/3-bedroom apts ₹1000/1500/2500; ☎) Fronted by a Portuguese-style home, rooms here are set among pretty gardens and have balconies and cathedral-ish windows. Apartments rented for short stays when available.

BAGA

Cavala Seaside Resort

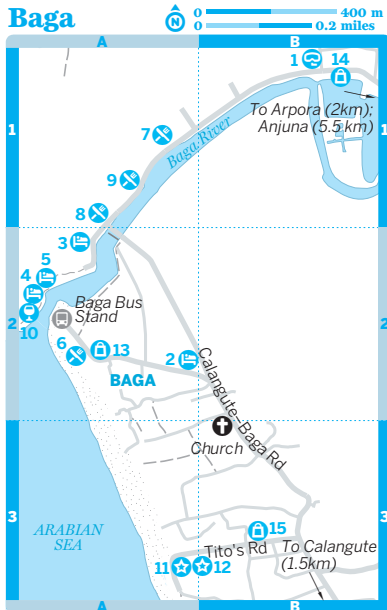
HOTEL \$\$

(☎2276090; www.cavala.com; s/d/stc incl breakfast from ₹850/1300/2200; ☎☎☎) Classy, ivy-clad Cavala has been charming Baga-bound travellers for more than 30 years, and continues to deliver clean, simple, nicely furnished rooms among a large complex with two swimming pools (₹150 for nonguests). There's a good vibe about the place and friendly staff, and the bar-restaurant cooks up a storm most evenings, with frequent live music.

Divine Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎2279546, 9370273464; www.indivinehome.com; s/d from ₹700/1000; ☎☎☎) The Divine welcomes you with a 'Praise the Lord' gatepost



Baga

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 1 Barracuda Diving..... B1

Sleeping

- 2 Cavala Seaside Resort A2
 3 Divine Guest House A2
 Johnny's (see 4)
 4 Melissa Guest House A2
 5 Nani's Bar & Rani's Restaurant A2

Eating

- 6 Britto's A2
 7 J&A's A1
 8 Le Poisson Rouge A1
 9 Lila Café A1

Drinking

- 10 Sun Set A2

Entertainment

- 11 Café Mambo A3
 12 Tito's B3

Shopping

- 13 Karma Collection A2
 14 Mackie's Saturday Nite Bazaar B1
 15 Tara Travels B3

NILAYA HERMITAGE

Spend a night at what may be Goa's most sophisticated luxury hotel, 5km from the beach atop a verdant hill at Arpora, and you'll be signing the guest book with the likes of Sean Connery, Manish Arora and Kate Moss. At **Nilaya Hermitage** (☎2276793/94; www.nilaya.com; Arpora; d incl breakfast, dinner & spa €350; 🍷🍷🍷), red-stone laterite structures undulate around a swimming pool, and the 10 luxury rooms and four stunning tents could not be more elegantly styled. Everything is done in the colour of lapis lazuli or warm whites, set off by old brass, chunky wood and perfect touches. The food is as dreamy as the surroundings, and the spa's sublime.

and keeps perky reminders throughout the place, so only stay here if you don't mind cheerful proselytising. Rooms are sweet and homey, with bright colours, lots of kitsch and the odd individual touch, all at a quiet riverside location.

Nani's Bar & Rani's Restaurant

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎22276313; www.naniranigoa.com; r without/with AC ₹1300/1500; 🍷🍷) Nani's is as charming as it is well situated, with clean, simply furnished rooms (think fresh paint, a working phone) set around a garden and a gorgeous colonial bungalow that overlook the water.

Melissa Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2279583; d ₹500) Neat little rooms, all with attached bathrooms and hot-water showers, comprise this quiet, good-value little place, pleasantly located in a lush spot near the water. Upstairs, **Johnny's** (☎2914000; d ₹600) is almost as good.



Eating

Calangute and Baga have everything from fresh fish cooked up on the beach to the finest Scottish smoked salmon. The main beach strip is thick with vendors selling grilled corn, *pav bhaji* (spiced vegetables and bread) and luminescent candyfloss, as well as the usual beach-shack cuisine. Dining gets more sophisticated to the north and south. The market area, meanwhile, is filled with chai-and-thali joints, and vendors at Baga's bus-stand area sell chai, omelettes and other nonveg snacks for super cheap.

CALANGUTE



Plantain Leaf

INDIAN \$

(thalis ₹70-90, mains ₹75-150) On the 1st floor, at a slight remove from the business of the intersection below, is the pure-veg Plantain Leaf. The many Indian families that fill the booths here know a good thing when they

see it: the tea is good, the place is cosy, busy and bright, and the veg thali might be the best you'll get in Goa.

Infantaria

BAKERY, ITALIAN \$\$

(Calangute-Baga Rd; pastries ₹50-100, mains ₹110-275; ☎7.30am-midnight) Next to the São João Batista church is this delish bakery-turned-awesome-Italian-restaurant, loaded with homemade croissants, little flaky pastries, real coffee, Goan and Italian specialities, and lots of booze. The noticeboard here is a hotbed for all things current and counter-current.

A Reverie

CONTINENTAL \$\$\$

(Holiday St; mains ₹315-575; ☎7pm-2am) A gorgeous lounge-bar, all armchairs, cool jazz and sparkling crystals, this is the place to spoil yourself with the likes of Serrano ham, grilled asparagus, French wines and Italian cheeses. Try the delectable cream prawn velouté with fennel soup (₹250) or splurge on the smoked French mallard duck breast in madeira jus with sour cherries (₹995).

Casandré

GOAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(mains ₹60-140; ☎8.30am-3pm & 6pm-midnight) Housed in an old Portuguese-style bungalow, this dim and tranquil retreat seems mightily out of place amid the tourist tat of Calangute's main beach drag. With a long and old-fashioned menu encompassing everything from 'sizzlers' to Goan specialities, and a cocktail list featuring the good old gimlet, this is a loveable time warp.

BAGA

Le Poisson Rouge

FRENCH \$\$\$

(mains ₹310-390; ☎7pm-midnight) Baga manages to do fine dining with aplomb, and this French-slanted experience is one of the picks of the place. Simple local ingredients are combined into winning dishes such as beetroot carpaccio (₹185) and red-snapper

masala (₹390), and served up beneath the stars.



J&A's

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(mains ₹305-445) A pretty cafe set around a gorgeous Portuguese-style villa, this little slice of Italy is a treat even before the sumptuous, if rather pricey, food arrives. The jazz-infused garden and twinkling evening lights make for a romantic setting, too. Add to this triple-filtered water, electric car and composted leftovers, and you've got an experience that's as earth-friendly as it is indulgent.

Lila Café

CAFE \$\$

(mains ₹110-270; ☎8.30am-6pm Wed-Mon) German-run place with home-baked breads, perfect, frothy cappuccinos and power-house mains like goulash with spaetzle.

Britto's

MULTICUISINE, BAR \$\$

(mains ₹95-260; ☎8.30am-midnight) A Baga institution. Tip: stick to the Goan seafood dishes.



Drinking & Entertainment

Baga's club scene bubbles on long after the parties further north have been locked down. If you're up for a night of decadent drinking or dancing on the tables, you're in the right place. For something lower-key, go for the bars on Calangute's main seaside road.

Jerry's Place

BAR

Also known as JJJ, Jerry's Place is a cute little Calangute bar-resto that's just dingy enough to keep things interesting. Snacks and basic Indian meals (from ₹50) are available, and surprisingly decent rooms (₹800) are just upstairs.

Café Mambo

NIGHTCLUB

(☎9822765002; www.titos.in; couple ₹500; ☎10.30pm-3am) Mambo's is Baga's club of the moment: it's slightly sophisticated (relative to Baga), with nightly DJs pumping out mostly commercial house and hip hop, and the occasional (Western) retro nights. **Tito's**, just next door, used to be Baga's 'it' club. It's still worth a visit, especially for Bollywood nights. Cover, rules and hours are the same as Mambo's, and for both clubs, women enter free, but unaccompanied gents don't enter at all.

Kerkar Art Complex

CULTURAL PROGRAMS

(☎2276017, 9923958016; www.subodhkerkar.com; Holiday St; ☎10am-7pm) Showcasing the work of local artist Dr Subodh Kerkar, this Calang-

ute complex is most notable for the open-air music and dance recitals – on Tuesday and Thursday nights and some weekends – hosted by its multicuisine restaurant, **Waves** (mains ₹300-500; ☎11am-3pm & 7pm-2am).

Sun Set

BAR, MULTICUISINE

(☎7.30am-10.30pm) Just a little spot to watch the sunset and the boats with a drink; at low tide, you can walk through the water back to Baga beach.



Shopping

Both **Mackie's Saturday Nite Bazaar** (www.mackiesnitebazaar.com), in Baga, and the larger **Ingo's Saturday Nite Bazaar** (www.ingosbazaar.com), in Arpora, about 2km northeast of Baga, start around 6pm and are fun alternatives to Anjuna's Wednesday market. They were running at the time of research but have been cancelled from time to time in recent years for reasons unclear. Ask around to see if they're on.

Karma Collection

SOUVENIRS

(www.karmacollectiongoa.com; ☎9.30am-10.30pm) This fixed-price shop in Baga has the usual patchwork wall hangings, but also antiques from across South Asia.

Literati Bookshop & Cafe

BOOKSTORE

(☎2277740; www.literati-goa.com; ☎10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) A refreshingly different bookstore, in the owners' Calangute home. Ask about readings and other events.

Tara Travels

BOOKSTORE

(☎9am-midnight Mon-Sat) A good selection of new and secondhand books in Baga; it's also a book exchange and travel agency.



Information

Currency exchange offices, ATMs, pharmacies and tons of internet cafes cluster around Calangute's main market and bus stand area, with several more (of everything) along the Baga and Candolim roads.

MGM International Travels (www.mgmtravels.com; Umta Vaddo, Calangute; ☎9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) A long-established and trusted travel agency with competitive prices on domestic and international air tickets.

Thomas Cook (☎2282455; Calangute-Anjuna Rd, Calangute; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat) Currency exchange and the like.



Getting There & Around

Frequent buses to Panaji (₹14, 45 minutes) and Mapusa (₹10) depart from the Baga and Calangute bus stands, and a local bus (₹5) runs

between the Baga and Calangute stands every few minutes; catch it anywhere along the way. A prepaid taxi from Dabolim Airport to Calangute costs ₹645.

Anjuna

Dear old Anjuna, that stalwart on India's hippy scene, still drags out the sarongs and sandalwood each Wednesday for its famous – and once infamous – flea market. Though it continues to pull in droves of backpackers and long-term hippies, midrange tourists are also increasingly making their way here. The town itself might be a bit ragged around the edges these days, but that's all part of its cosy charm, and Anjuna remains a favourite of long-stayers and first-timers alike.



Activities

Anjuna's charismatic, rocky **beach** runs for almost 2km from the northern village area to the flea market. The northern end shrinks

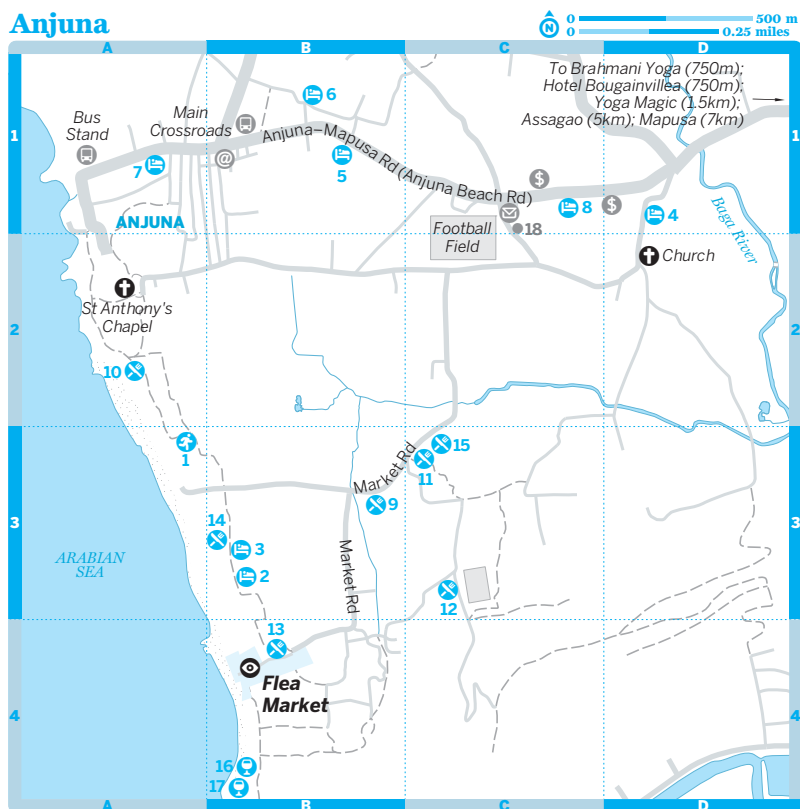
to almost nothing when the tide washes in, but when the tide goes out, it becomes a lovely, and surprisingly quiet, stretch of sand. For more action, **paragliding** (tandem rides ₹1500) sometimes takes place on market days off the headland at the southern end of the beach.

If you're looking to embellish yourself while in town, try **Andy's Tattoo Studio** (www.andys-tattoo-studio-anjuna-goa.com; ☎ noon-7pm Mon-Sat), behind the San Francisco Restaurant and brimming with attitude. Drop in to make an appointment and get a quote for your permanent souvenir.

Yoga

There's lots of yoga, reiki and ayurvedic massage offered around Anjuna; look for notices at Café Diogo and the German Bakery. Drop-in classes are organised by **Avalon Sunset** (www.yogainternationalorganisation.com; classes ₹300-400) and at **Brahmani Yoga** (☎ 9370568639; www.brahmaniyoga.com; classes

Anjuna



₹500), next to Hotel Bougainvillea. Also consider staying at Yoga Magic or the Ashtanga Purple Valley Yoga Retreat, both lovely resorts with longer-term yoga programs.

Sleeping

Most accommodation and other useful services are sprinkled along the beach, or down shady inland lanes. Dozens of rooms of the largely concrete cell variety run along Anjuna's northern cliff-top stretch; most come in at ₹400 to ₹600 per night. There are also plenty of small, family-run guesthouses tucked back from the main beach strip, offering nicer double rooms for a similar price; take your pick from the dozens of 'Rooms to Let' signs.

Hotel Bougainvillea HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$
(Granpa's Inn; ☎2273270/71; www.granpasinn.com; d/ste incl breakfast & tax from ₹2200/2950; ☎☎☎) This old-fashioned hotel in a 200-year-old yellow mansion is ridiculously pretty. Elegant rooms have that rare combination of charm and luxury, and the pool

area is gorgeous, with lots of trees around. The grounds are so lush and shady, in fact, that the place seems a good few degrees cooler than the rest of Anjuna.

Vilanova GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎6450389, 9225904244; mendonca90@rediffmail.com; d without/with AC ₹700/900; ☎) Big, clean rooms have fridge, TV, 24-hour hot water and window screens and are set in three Portuguese-style bungalows in a cute little compound. There are good vibes and a comfortable family atmosphere, with friendly staff and a good-value restaurant. We almost hate to tell anyone about it!

Yoga Magic GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$
(☎6523796; www.yogamagic.net; s/d huts ₹4500/6000, ste ₹6000/8000; ☎) Solar lighting, vegetable farming and compost toilets are just some of the worthy initiatives practised in this ultraluxurious yoga resort, where hand-printed textiles, reclaimed-wood furniture and organic, gourmet vegetarian food are the order of the day. 'Huts' are of the stunning, dramatic Rajasthani variety. Rates include breakfast; daily yoga classes cost an extra ₹400 per session.

Anjuna

🕒 Top Sights

Flea Market B4

📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

1 Andy's Tattoo Studio A3

🛏 Sleeping

- 2 Faiz'd B3
3 Florinda's Guest House B3
4 Palacete Rodrigues D1
5 Paradise B1
6 Peace Land B1
7 Sea Wave Inn A1
8 Vilanova C1

🍴 Eating

- 9 6Pack Bar & Restaurant B3
10 Avalon Sunset A2
11 Café Diogo C3
12 German Bakery C3
13 Maria's Tea Stall B4
14 Shore Bar B3
15 Whole Bean Tofu Shop & Vegetaria C3

🍷 Drinking

- 16 Curlie's B4
17 Shiva Valley B4

Information

- 18 Speedy Travels C1

Faiz'd GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎9619855350; tents ₹800) The spacious, high-end tents here are lined with embroidered fabric, have tile floors and attached bathrooms, and are set in pretty grounds – like a little tent village – with winding, lamp-lit paths. The location, a stone's throw from the beach, isn't bad, either.

Palacete Rodrigues HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$
(☎2273358, 9422056467; www.palacetegoa.com; s/d from ₹850/1000, d/ste with AC ₹1550/1750; ☎) This old-fashioned mansion, filled with antiques, odd corners and bags of fun, tacky charm, is as cool and quirky as they come. Choose your theme: rooms come in Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese and, of course, Goan flavours.

Paradise GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎9922541714; janet_965@hotmail.com; Anjuna-Mapusa Rd; d ₹600-800, with AC ₹1500; ☎) The friendly, homey Paradise is fronted by an old Portuguese house, and its clean rooms are set in rustic grounds full of crowing roosters and sleeping cats. Proprietor Janet and her enterprising family also run a general store, restaurant, internet cafe (₹40 per hour), travel agency, money exchange, Western Union services and beauty parlour (₹250 for

GOA'S FLEA MARKET EXPERIENCE: GOAN, GOAN, GONE?

Wednesday's weekly flea market at Anjuna is as much part of the Goan experience as a day on a deserted beach. More than two decades ago, it was the sole preserve of hippies smoking jumbo joints and convening to compare experiences on the heady Indian circuit. Nowadays, things are far more staid and mainstream, and package tourists seem to beat out independent travellers in both numbers and purchasing power. A couple of hours here and you'll never want to see a mirrored bedspread, brass figurine or floaty Indian cotton dress again in your life. That said, it's still a good time, and you can find some interesting one-off souvenirs and clothing in among the tourist tat. Remember to bargain hard and take along equal quantities of patience and stamina, applicable to dealing with local and expat vendors alike.

head massages). You name it and Janet can probably arrange it for you.

Florinda's Guest House GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎9890216520, 9762331032; r ₹400-900) One of the better cheapies near the beach, Florinda's has clean rooms, with 24-hour hot water and window screens, set around a garden with the world's tiniest pool.

Peace Land GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎2273700; s/d ₹450/600; 🏠) Rooms here are small but arranged around a tranquil courtyard garden. There's also a pool table here, a chill-out area and a small shop selling basic provisions. Customer service could use some help though.

Purple Valley Yoga Retreat GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$
(☎2268364; www.yogagoa.com; 142 Bairo Alto, Assagao; 🏠) This popular yoga resort in nearby Assagao offers one- and two-week residential courses in Ashtanga yoga; weekly rates, which include accommodation, classes and meals, begin at ₹480 per person.

Sea Wave Inn HOTEL \$
(Sea Queen; ☎2274455; seaqueenanjuna@gmail.com; Anjuna-Mapusa Rd; r without/with AC ₹800/1000; 🏠) Good rooms and friendly staff, and the outdoor restaurant, which shows movies and sports on a big screen, is a fun night-time hang-out.



Eating & Drinking

Inside the flea market on market days (Wednesdays), look for the teensy **Maria's Tea Stall** (snacks from ₹10), selling tasty chai and snacks made by colourful elderly local Maria herself. **Curlie's** (mains ₹80-250; ☀9am-3am) and **Shiva Valley** (mains ₹80-240; ☀8am-midnight), both big, loud bar-restaurants, are good for an evening sunset drink, an alternative crowd and the odd im-

promptu party. Head to either to find out what's on.

Shore Bar MULTICUISINE \$\$
(mains ₹120-400) Anjuna has lots of cliffside cafes with the standard traveller-orientated menus, happy hours and stunning coastal views, but the food is overwhelmingly mediocre. Shore Bar is the exception: the grilled baguettes, seafood, and especially coffees are supergood (at a price), the walls are adorned with cool art, and loungey day beds and sofas are full of happy, mellow dreadlocked customers. Shore also has a no-commission art gallery and rooms out back. There were rumours at research time about relocating; we hope it's still there by the time you arrive.

German Bakery MULTICUISINE \$\$
(pastries ₹30-50, mains ₹70-170; 🏠) Leafy and filled with prayer flags, jolly lights and atmospheric curtained nooks, this is a perfect place for a relaxed dinner. Innovative tofu dishes are a speciality: this may be your only chance to try tofu tikka (₹150). There's live music and sometimes Middle Eastern dancers on Wednesday night and round-the-clock wi-fi (₹100 per hour).

Café Diogo CAFE \$
(Market Rd; snacks ₹30-100; ☀8am-5pm) Probably the best fruit salads in the world are sliced and diced at Café Diogo, a small locally run cafe on the way to the market. Also worth a munch are the generous toasted avocado, cheese and mushroom sandwiches.

Whole Bean Tofu Shop & Vegetaria CAFE \$\$
(Market Rd; mains ₹60-150; ☀8am-5pm) One of the only places in Goa where vegans can eat well, this tofu-filled health-food cafe focuses on all things created from that most versatile of beans. Breakfasts include eggs (for the nonvegans) and a surprisingly good tofu scramble with onions and toast (₹130).

6Pack Bar & Restaurant MULTICUISINE, BAR \$\$\$ (Market Rd; mains ₹60-200; ☎9am-midnight) Everyone loves 6Pack for its excellent 'traditional' – that's code for beef – cheeseburgers (₹170), pool table, and festive vibe when sports are shown on the big screen upstairs.

Avalon Sunset MULTICUISINE \$ (mains ₹50-140; ☎) Nice views but so-so food; we only mention it for the wi-fi (₹40 per hour).

i Information

Anjuna has three ATMs, clustered together about 100m east of **Bank of Baroda** (☎9.30am-2.30pm), which gives cash advances on Visa and MasterCard.

Om Sai Internet (Anjuna-Mapusa Rd; per hr ₹40; ☎10.30am-11pm Mon-Sat)

Speedy Travels (☎2273266; ☎9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) Reliable agency for air and train ticket booking, a range of tours (including one to Dudhsagar Falls), and credit-card advances or currency exchange.

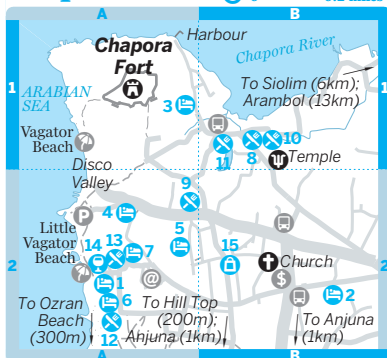
i Getting There & Away

Buses to Mapusa (₹10) depart every half-hour or so from the main bus stand near the beach; some from Mapusa continue on to Vagator and Chapora. Two daily buses to Calangute depart from the main crossroads. Cabs and pilots gather at both stops, and you can hire scooters and motorcycles easily from the crossroads.

Vagator & Chapora

Dramatic red-stone cliffs, dense green forests and a crumbling 17th-century **Portuguese fort** provide Vagator and its diminutive neighbour Chapora with one of the prettiest

Vagator & Chapora



settings on the north Goan coast. Once known for their wild trance parties and heady, hippy lifestyles, things have slowed down considerably these days, though Chapora – reminiscent of Star Wars' Mos Eisley Cantina – remains a fave for smokers, with the smell of charas hanging heavy in the air. It also has slightly more personality than Vagator, but fewer eating and sleeping options.

If you're keen to see the remnants of the trance scene, hang around long enough in Vagator and you'll likely be handed a flyer for a party (many with international DJs), which can range from divine to dire. You may also catch wind of something going down in a hidden location. If you're lucky, it won't have been closed down by the time you get there.

🛏 Sleeping

VAGATOR

You'll see lots of signs for 'rooms to let' in private homes and guesthouses along Ozran Beach Rd and on side roads too. Most charge around ₹500 per double.

TOP CHOICE Shalom

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2273166; d ₹800-1000) Arranged around a placid garden not far from the path down to Little Vagator Beach, this place, run by a

Vagator & Chapora

📍 Top Sights

Chapora Fort..... A1

🛏 Sleeping

- 1 Alcove Resort..... A2
- 2 Bean Me Up Soya Station..... B2
- 3 Casa de Olga..... A1
- 4 Garden Villa..... A2
- 5 Janies..... A2
- 6 Paradise on the Earth..... A2
- 7 Shalom..... A2

🍴 Eating

- Bean Me Up Soya Station.....(see 2)
- 8 Jai Ganesh Fruit Juice Centre..... B1
 - 9 Mango Tree Bar & Café..... A2
 - 10 Scarlet Cold Drinks..... B1
 - 11 Sunrise Restaurant..... B1
 - 12 Thalassa..... A2
 - 13 Yangkhor Moonlight..... A2

🍷 Drinking

- 14 Nine Bar..... A2

🛍 Shopping

- 15 Rainbow Bookshop..... B2

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

Though Goa was long legendary among Western visitors for its all-night, open-air Goan trance parties, a central government 'noise pollution' ban on loud music in open spaces between 10pm and 6am has largely curbed its often notorious, drug-laden party scene: Goa simply does not party the way it used to. With a tourist industry to nurture, however, authorities tend to turn a blind eye to parties during the peak Christmas–New Year period. Late nights are also allowed in interior spaces, which is why clubs carry on without problems. If you're looking for the remainder of the real party scene, though, you'll need to cross your fingers, keep your ear close to the ground, and wait out for word in Vagator or Anjuna.

friendly family (whose home is on site), has a variety of extremely well-kept rooms, and a two-bedroom apartment for long-stayers.

Janies

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2273635, 9850057794; janiesricardo@yahoo.com; d ₹800, 1-/2-bed bungalow ₹1200/1500) A great choice for long-stayers, run by a very friendly woman and with a simple but homely vibe. The two double rooms each come equipped with fridge and TV, and the three large bungalows have either one or two bedrooms and full-on kitchen.

Bean Me Up Soya Station

HOTEL \$

(☎2273479; www.myspace.com/beanmeupindia; d ₹680, without bathroom ₹475; ☺) The rooms around a leafy, parachute-silky courtyard might look a bit cell-like from the outside, but step in and you'll be pleased to find that the billowing silks and mellow, earthy shades follow you there. Scooters are available for rent, and there's a great vegetarian restaurant.

Paradise on the Earth

BEACH HUTS \$

(☎2273591; www.moondance.co.nr; huts without bathroom ₹500-1000) Simple bamboo huts (not too common in these parts) clinging to the cliff above Little Vagator Beach are great value for the beachside location, though the name might be a little overkill.

Garden Villa

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎6529454, 9822104780; Vagator Beach Rd; r ₹250-500) Big, clean, cheap and friendly, on pretty grounds near Vagator Beach. Room No 14 has an old four-poster.

CHAPORA

Head down the road to the harbour and you'll find lots of rooms – and whole homes – for rent; check out a few before you commit.

Casa de Olga

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2274355, 9822157145; r ₹1500, without bathroom ₹500) This exceedingly welcoming family place has rooms arranged around a pretty

garden in a variety of sizes. The cheaper ones are basic (but comfy and clean), while the pricier ones have hot showers, kitchenette with fridge, and balcony. It's in a pretty spot near the harbour, too.



Eating

VAGATOR

A few eating options cluster around the entrance to Little Vagator Beach, along with the usual slew of much-of-a-muchness beach shacks down on the sands.



Thalassa

GREEK \$\$

(☎9850033537; mains ₹180-400; ☺4pm-midnight) Authentic and ridiculously good Greek food is served here alfresco on a breezy terrace to the sound of the sea just below. Go for the specials; when we visited, beef stifado (₹270) and lamb meatballs in red sauce (₹320) were on the list. But veggie dishes also excel. The *spanakorizo* (spinach and rice cooked with Greek olive oil and herbs and topped with feta; ₹230) is hearty and deceptively simple: the fresh ingredients and expert preparation are what made us swoon. Reservations essential. Thalassa also has **huts** (₹1000), which are almost as classy as the restaurant.



Yangkhor

TIBETAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

Moonlight

(mains ₹70-200) Superfresh food is glorified in the Tibetan and even the Italian dishes here. The veg *momo* (Tibetan dumpling) soup (₹80)? You'll die. The pasta? F-ing delish. The chairs and tablecloths are plastic and the walls are lime green, but – maybe because of the friendly service and the soft Chinese pop music – it's cosy to boot.

Mango Tree Bar & Café

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(mains ₹90-210; ☺9am-4am) With loud reggae, crappy service, dark-wood furniture and mango-colour walls, a sometimes rambunc-

tious bar scene, terracotta lanterns, and a good vibe, Mango Tree is an ever-popular place for all that and for its really good food. Films or sports are screened most nights.

Bean Me Up Soya Station

MULTICUISINE, VEGAN \$\$\$

(Ozran Beach Rd; mains ₹120-250; ☺8am-4pm & 7-11pm) Oh, veggies and vegans, you've had a hard time in Goa. Come here and relax in the garden, full of tall trees and black pepper vines, and eat tofu Thai curry (₹230) or seitan fried onion (₹130) to your heart's delight, followed by lusciously egg-less desserts. The all-veg restaurant also has breakfasts, juices and even a bar, and an on-site shop sells to-funaise and soysage.

CHAPORA

Chapora's eating situation is not as evolved as Vagator's. Little restaurants pepper the centre (such as it is), but they're reliable only for caloric intake. **Sunrise Restaurant** (mains ₹70-150) is nothing special but good enough, with friendly service, while the very popular **Scarlet Cold Drinks** (juices & snacks ₹20-80) and **Jai Ganesh Fruit Juice Centre** (juices ₹20-70) are both in close proximity to the thickest gusts of charas smoke. Scarlet has an exceptionally good noticeboard, while Jai Ganesh has cold coffee and avocado lassis.



Drinking & Entertainment

Aside from secretive parties, there's not as much going on in Vagator and Chapora these days; gone are the all-nighters and the beach trance is now turned off promptly at 10pm. But Chapora's extremely mellow hole-in-the-wall bars are a certain kind of entertainment; Vagator's **Nine Bar** (☺6pm-4am) and **Hill Top**, on the Anjuna road, are still thumping on; and the Russians, having taken the party crown away from the Israelis, seem to create nightlife in various spots around town.



Shopping

Rainbow Bookshop BOOKSTORE
(☺10am-2pm & 3-7pm) In Vagator, this lovely little shop, run by a charming elderly gentleman, stocks a good range of second-hand and new books.



Information

Vagator's sole ATM is at **Corporation Bank** on the road to Anjuna. Plenty of internet places are scattered around town, but **Mira Cybercafe**

2000 (Ozran Beach Rd; ☺9am-2pm & 3-11pm; per hr ₹40) is best.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses run from Chapora, through Vagator, to Mapusa (₹10) throughout the day, many via Anjuna. The buses start in Chapora village, but there are a couple of other stops in Chapora and Vagator. We couldn't find any bicycles to rent here, sadly (ask around; it's a supply-and-demand thing), but prices for scooters/motorbikes tend to be around ₹200/300 per day in high season.

Morjim & Asvem

Morjim and Asvem, a pretty strip of mostly empty sand, is one of the very few beaches where sunbathing doesn't attract hordes of hawkers, dogs and onlookers. The water, though, does suffer from a bit of river run-off pollution and cannot ever be described as crystal clear. Nonetheless, rare olive ridley turtles nest at the beach's southern end from September to February, so this is a protected area, which, in theory at least, means no development and no rubbish. Morjim and Asvem have a handful of low-key beach shacks and several places to stay and eat, including the beachfront **Goan Café** (☎2244394; www.goancafe.com; huts ₹1150-1350, without bathroom ₹800, apt from ₹1250; ☺), whose three brother-owners might well be the friendliest and most helpful hotel owners in Goa; **Meems' Beach Resort** (☎3290703; www.meemsbeachresort.com; d/q huts from ₹1500/3500; ☺), which has a range of huts and rooms also right on the beach, along with free wi-fi and an atmospheric restaurant; and **La Plage** (mains ₹215-315), known for its high-caliber French food.

Mandrem

Peaceful, quiet, hidden Mandrem has in recent years become a refuge for those seeking a break from the traveller scenes of Arambol and Anjuna – and those who avoided the scene to begin with. The beach is beautiful, and there's little to do but laze on it. Coco-huts can be had for around ₹500. It's not easy to get here by public transport; hire a scooter or cab in Arambol.

There's lots of yoga around, mostly taught by foreigners each season. **Himalaya Yoga Valley** (☎9922719982; www.yogagoindia.com) specialises in hatha and ashtanga teacher-training courses, but also has walk-in classes (₹300) twice daily.

Sleeping & Eating

Dunes

BEACH HUTS \$

(☎2247219; www.dunesgoa.com; d/q huts ₹950/1500; @) Pretty huts here are peppered around a palm-forest allée leading to the beach, and at night, globe lamps light up the place like a palm-tree dreamland. Dunes also has friendly, helpful staff, a good restaurant on the beach, and clean, cosy, muslin-lined huts with mosquito nets and balconies with comfy chairs or couches. It's a peaceful, feel-good kind of place, with yoga classes, yoga teachers -to-be hanging around drinking healthful juices, and a marked absence of trance.

Cuba Retreat

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2645775; www.cubagoa.com; d without/with AC ₹1250/1550; ☞) The sheets here are tucked in *tight* (we heart fastidiousness!) and rooms are clean and tidy as anything, but Cuba really scores for its retro white-and-kelly-green exterior, kind staff and good bar-restaurant in the courtyard, which is also home to a hanging swing.

Oasis on the Beach

BEACH HUTS \$\$

(☎9822163886; r/huts ₹1500/2000) A great, slightly higher-end beach-hut option, Oasis has some huts with balconies overlooking the sea, and an excellent ayurvedic-massage centre (massages from ₹1000). Oasis's beach-front restaurant gets rave reviews, too, especially for its seafood and tandoori dishes.

Villa River Cat

GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$

(☎2247928; www.villarivercat.com; d ₹2000-3800; ☞) This unusual circular guesthouse is filled with art, antiques and a lot of spunk, but it should be even spunkier (and friendlier) for the price.

Arambol (Harmal)

Arambol first emerged in the 1960s as a melow paradise for long-haired long-stayers, and ever since, travellers attracted to the hippy atmosphere have been drifting up to this blissed-out corner of Goa, setting up camp and, in some cases, never leaving. As a result, in the high season the beach and the road leading down to it (the town is basically one road) can get pretty crowded – with huts, people and nonstop stalls selling the usual tourist stuff. If you're looking for a committed traveller vibe, this is the place to come; if you're seeking laid-back languidness, you might be better off heading down the coast to Mandrem or Morjim.

Activities

Himalayan Iyengar Yoga Centre

YOGA

(www.hiyogacentre.com) A popular spot for Iyengar yoga, with five-day courses (beginning on Fridays; ₹3000), intensive workshops, children's classes, and teacher training all available. The centre is a five-minute walk from the beach, off the main road; look for the big banner. HI also has **huts** (s/d without bathroom ₹250/300) for students.

Arambol Hammocks

PARAGLIDING

(☎9822389005; www.arambol.com; per 20min ₹1800; ☉9am-6pm) Paragliding and kite surfing are getting big in Arambol, and several operators give lessons and rent equipment on the very south of Arambol beach. At the north end, Arambol Hammocks is a more established paragliding option, and it also sells...hammocks.

Sleeping

Accommodation in Arambol is almost all of the budget variety, and it pays to trawl the cliffside to the north and south of Arambol's main beach stretch for the best hut options. It's almost impossible to book in advance: simply turn up early in the day to check out who's checking out. The area around the Narayan temple (take a left turn off the main road as you enter town), also has several guesthouses of similar quality.

Chilli's

HOTEL \$

(☎9921882424; s/d ₹300/400) This clean and simple place, owned by superfriendly and helpful Derick Fernandes, is one of Arambol's best nonbeachside bargains. Chilli's offers 10 nice, no-frills rooms on the beach road, near the beach entrance, all with attached bathroom, fan and hot-water shower; there's an honour system for buying bottled water, self-service, from the fridge on the landing.

Shree Sai Cottages

BEACH HUTS \$\$

(☎3262823, 9420767358; shreesai_cottages@yahoo.com; huts without bathroom ₹1000) A short walk north from the main Arambol beach, Shree Sai has a calm, easygoing vibe and really cute hut-cottages with little balconies and lovely views out over the water. Maybe the best of the beach-hut bunch.

Om Ganesh

BEACH HUTS \$

(☎9404436447; r & huts ₹800) Popular huts right on the edge of the water, as well as rooms, managed by the friendly Sudir. The seaside Om Ganesh Restaurant is also a

great place for lunch or dinner. Note that everyone in the area will tell you that their place is Om Ganesh; it's a family enterprise. Call ahead to avoid confusion.

Lamuella GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎9822486314; s/d ₹600/900) Cute, charming rooms with curtains made from saris, built-in cathedral-arch shelving, pretty mosaic tiles around mirrors and little balconies. Far from the beach though.

Eating & Drinking

Sparkly and parachute-silk-draped places to eat are everywhere in Arambol. Many change annually, but **21 Coconuts** (for seafood) and **Relax Inn** (for Italian) are mainstays. For simpler fare, head up to Arambol village, by the bus stop, where small local joints will whip you up a thali (₹40) and a chai (₹4).

Shimon MIDDLE EASTERN \$
(light meals ₹60-120; ☎9am-11pm) If you can navigate the surly service and total lack of ambience, then fill up on an exceptional falafel (₹90) at Israeli-owned Shimon before hitting the beach. For something more unusual, go for *sabikh* (₹100), aubergine slices stuffed into pita bread with boiled egg, potato, salad and spicy relishes. Follow either up with Turkish coffee (₹35).

Fellini ITALIAN \$\$
(mains ₹140-280; ☎11am-11pm) Pizza's the big deal here – the menu has no fewer than 41 different kinds – and the pastas, calzones and paninis, especially with seafood, are also tasty. The tiramisu (₹60) will keep you up at night, thinking back on it fondly.

Double Dutch MULTICUISINE \$\$
(mains ₹110-290) An ever-popular option for its steaks, salads, Thai and Indonesian dishes, and famous apple pies, all in a pretty garden setting. The noticeboard here is also worth a peruse, maybe while munching on a plateful of cookies or a huge sandwich.

German Bakery BAKERY, MULTICUISINE \$
(Welcome Inn; pastries ₹20-60, mains ₹40-75) This rather dim and dingy corner cafe is surprisingly popular, with so-so pastries (eg lemon cheese pie, ₹50), big breakfasts (₹100 to ₹140) and Arambol's best masala chai.

Outback Bar MULTICUISINE \$\$
(mains ₹70-150) Seafood's a speciality at this place tucked away from the Arambol action.

Information

Internet outfits, travel agents and money changers are as common as monsoon frogs on the road leading down to Arambol's beach, while several agencies toward the top of the road also offer parcel services by post, FedEx and DHL. The closest ATM is in Siolim, about 12km south. **JBL Enterprises** (per hr ₹40; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Internet cafe, travel agency, money and ISD: one-stop shopping.

Getting There & Around

Buses to Mapusa (₹20, 1½ hours) depart from Arambol village every half-hour. It's only about 1.5km from the main beach area, but you're lucky if you get a cab, or even an autorickshaw, for ₹50. A prepaid taxi to Arambol from Dabolim Airport costs ₹975; from Mapusa it's ₹400.

Lots of places in Arambol rent scooters and motorbikes, for ₹200 and ₹300, respectively, per day; we like Derick's, at Chilli's, the best.

SOUTH GOA

Margao (Madgaon)

POP 94,400

The capital of Salcete province, Margao (also known as Madgaon) is the main population centre of south Goa and is a friendly, bustling market town of a manageable size for getting things done, or for getting in and out of the state. If you're basing yourself in south Goa, it's great for shopping, organising travel arrangements or simply enjoying the busy energy of big-city India without big-city hassles. It's also your best base for visiting Chandor, Quepem or Dudhsagar Falls.

Sights

Margao has plenty of shopping opportunities, and the covered **MMC New Market** (☎8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) is one of the most colourful in all of Goa. It's also worth a walk around the lovely, small **Largo de Igreja** district, home to lots of atmospherically crumbling and gorgeously restored old Portuguese homes, and the quaint and richly decorated 17th-century **Church of the Holy Spirit**, particularly impressive when a Sunday morning service is taking place. The church also hosts services at 4pm on weekdays but is open erratically at other times.

The administrative heart of the city, the Municipal Building, is home to the dusty and awesome **Municipal Library** (☎8am-8pm

Margao (Madgaon)

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles



Margao (Madgaon)

Top Sights

- Church of the Holy SpiritB2
MMC New Market.....B4

Sights

- 1 Municipal LibraryA4

Sleeping

- 2 Hotel Tanish.....B4
3 Om Shiv Hotel.....B4

Eating

- 4 Café TatoB4
5 Longhuino's.....A4
6 SwaD.....B4

Shopping

- 7 Golden Heart Emporium.....A3

Information

- 8 DHL.....B4
9 Margao Residency.....A4
Reliance Cybercafe(see 2)

Transport

- 10 Paulo Travel MastersA4

bright-yellow building tucked away behind the Bank of India, Om Shiv does a fine line in 'executive' rooms, which all have AC, balcony and an ordered air. But it's mostly worth recommending for the suites, which have exceptional views, or as a Tanish backup.

Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 4-7pm Sat & Sun), which has some great books on Goa and a retro reading room where you can read the paper along with lots of gents in button-downs.

Sleeping

Hotel Tanish

HOTEL \$

(☎2735656; Reliance Trade Centre, Valaulikar Rd; s/d ₹600/850, s/d/ste with AC ₹750/1050/1600; 📞) The best place to stay in town – incongruously located on the top floor of a mall – has really kind staff and tidy, well-equipped rooms with great views of the surrounding countryside. Suites come with a bathtub, big TV and views all the way to Colva. Just make sure to ask for an outside-facing room; some overlook the mall interior. The hotel is near Grace Church.

Om Shiv Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2710294; www.omshivhotel.com; Cine Lata Rd; s/d/ste with AC from ₹1100/1400/2500; 📞) In a

Eating

SwaD

INDIAN \$

(New Market; veg thalis ₹40-75, mains ₹60-85) Margao's best veg food, hands down, is at the family-friendly, lunch-break favourite SwaD, across from Lotus Inn. The thalis are reliably delish, as are the snacks, South Indian tiffins, mains and all the other stuff on the 12-page menu of pure-veg scrumptiousness.

Longhuino's

GOAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Luis Miranda Rd; mains ₹60-150) Since 1950, quaint old Longhuino's bar and restaurant, with its old wooden chairs and slow service, has been serving up tasty Goan, Indian and Chinese dishes popular with locals and tourists alike. Go for the pork vindaloo (₹90) or the fried mussels with salad (₹120).

Café Tato

INDIAN \$

(Valaulikar Rd; thalis ₹50, mains ₹50-80; ☎Mon-Sat) A favourite local lunch spot: tasty

vegetarian fare in a bustling backstreet canteen.



Shopping

Golden Heart Emporium

BOOKSTORE

(Confidant House, Abade Faria Rd; ☎10am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat) One of Goa's best bookstores, crammed with fiction, nonfiction and illustrated books on the state's food, architecture and history.



Information

Banks offering currency exchange and 24-hour ATMs are all around town, especially near the municipal gardens and along Luis Miranda Rd.

Apollo Victor Hospital (☎2728888; Station Rd, Malbhat) Reliable medical services.

Cyberlink (Abade Faria Rd; per hr ₹20; ☎8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Not the best, but it'll do.

DHL (Gurusai Plaza, Isidoro Baptista Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Main post office (☎9am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat) North of the Municipal Gardens.

Margao Residency (☎2715096; www.goa-tourism.com) Book GTDC trips here.

Reliance Cybercafe (1st fl, Reliance Trade Centre, Valaulikar Rd; per hr ₹30; ☎9.30am-7pm) Fastest and friendliest.

Thomas Cook (Mabai Hotel Bldg; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)



Getting There & Around

BUS Government and private long-distance buses both depart from **Kadamba bus stand**, about 2km north of the municipal gardens. Private buses ply interstate routes several times a day and can be booked at offices all over town; try **Paulo Travel Masters** (☎2702922; 1st fl, Bella Vista Apt, Luis Miranda Rd; ☎8am-7.30pm). Sample long-distance high-season fares:

Bengaluru ₹400, 14 hours, one daily in evening

Bengaluru private; without/with AC ₹1000/1500, 13 hours

Gokarna ₹95, one daily

Hampi private; ₹1000-1200, nine hours

Hospet ₹240, 10 hours, one daily in evening

Mumbai private; without/with AC ₹800/1400, 14 hours

Palolem ₹27, one hour, every 30 minutes

Panaji express; ₹26, 45 minutes, every few minutes

Pune ₹400, 12 hours, one daily in evening

Pune private; without/with AC ₹800/1100, 11 hours

Vasco da Gama 'shuttle'; ₹35, 45 minutes, hourly (stops near Dabolim Airport on request)

Local buses to Benaulim (₹7), Betul (₹15), Colva (₹10) and Palolem (₹27) also swing by the bus stop on the east side of the Municipal Gardens every 15 minutes or so.

TAXI Taxis are plentiful around the municipal gardens, train station and Kadamba bus stand, and they'll go anywhere in Goa, including Palolem (₹700), Panaji (₹700), Calangute (₹900), Anjuna (₹1100) and Arambol (₹1600). Except for the train station, where there's a prepaid booth, you'll have to negotiate the fare with the driver.

Autorickshaws and pilots are the most popular way to get around town; most trips cost ₹50 and ₹30, respectively.

TRAIN Margao's well-organised train station, about 2km south of town, serves the Konkan Railway and other routes. Its **reservation hall** (☎information 2712790, PNR enquiry 2700730; ☎8am-2pm & 2.15-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) is on the 1st floor. Services to Mumbai, Mangalore, Ernakulum and Thiruvananthapuram are the most frequent. See p807 for more train information.

Chandor

The lush village of Chandor, 15km east of Margao, makes a perfect day away from the beaches, and it's here, more than anywhere else in the state, that the once opulent lifestyles of Goa's former landowners, who found favour with the Portuguese aristocracy, are still visible in its strings of quietly decaying colonial-era mansions. If you're around in January, Chandor hosts the colourful **Feast of the Three Kings** on the 6th, during which local boys re-enact the arrival of the three kings from the Christmas story.

Braganza House, built in the 17th century, is possibly the best example of what Goa's scores of once grand and glorious mansions have today become. Built on land granted by the King of Portugal, the house was divided from the outset into two wings, to house two sides of the same big family. The **West Wing** (☎2784201; ☎9am-5pm) belongs to one set of the family's descendants, the Menezes-Bragança, and is filled with gorgeous chandeliers, Italian marble floors, 250-year-old, locally made rosewood furniture, and antique treasures from Macau, Portugal, China and Europe. The elderly Mrs Aida Menezes-Bragança nowadays lives here alone, but will show you around with the help of her assistant. Between them, they struggle valiantly with the upkeep of a beautiful but needy house, whose grand history oozes from every inch of wall, floor and furniture. Next door, the

MAJOR TRAINS FROM MARGAO (MADGAON)

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURES
Ahmedabad (via Vadodara)	6338 Okha Express	371/1013/1394	20	10.45am Thu, Sat
Chennai (Madras)	7312 Vasco-da-Gama-Chennai Express	343/936/1286	21	3.15pm Thu
Delhi	2431 Rajdhani Express	2035/2615	27	10.15am Tue, Thu, Fri
Hubli	7312 Vasco-da-Gama-Chennai Express	124/316/427	6	3.15pm Thu
Ernakulum	2618 Lakshadweep Express	325/857/1167	14½	7.25pm
	6345 Netravati Express	345/827/1137	15½	10.40pm
Mangalore	2618 Lakshadweep Express	214/544/732	5	7.30pm
Mumbai (Bombay)	0112 Konkan Kanya Express	288/782/1073	12	6pm
	0104 Mandovi Express	288/782/1073	12	9.30am
	2052 Jan Shatabdi Express	197/680	9	2.30pm
Pune	2779 Goa Express	264/688/930	13	3.45pm
Thiruvananthapuram	2432 Rajdhani Express	1355/1770	17	12.40pm Mon, Wed, Thu
	6345 Thiruvananthapuram-Netravati Express	347/947/1302	18	10.40pm

Rajdhani fares are 3AC/2AC; Shatabdi fares are 2S/CC; Express fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC.

East Wing (☎2784227, 2857630; ☀10am-6pm) is owned by the Braganza-Pereiras, descendants of the other half of the family. It's nowhere near as grand: paint peels from windows, ceilings sag and antiques are mixed in with cheap knick-knacks and seaside souvenirs. But it's beautiful in its own, lived-in way (check out the kerosene fridge) and has a small but striking family chapel, which contains a carefully hidden fingernail of St Francis Xavier (see p808). Both homes are open daily, and there's almost always someone around to let you in. The owners rely on donations for the hefty costs of maintenance: if you choose to donate, ₹100 per visitor per house is reasonable, though anything extra is welcomed.

Down the road, the original building of the **Fernandes House** (☎2784245; ranferns@yahoo.co.in; admission ₹200; ☀9am-6pm), about 1km east of the church, dates back more than 500 years, while the Portuguese section was tacked on by the Fernandes family in 1821. The secret basement hideaway, full of gun holes and with an escape tunnel to the river, was used by the family to flee attackers.

The best way to get here is by cab from Margao: taxi charge ₹350 round trip, including waiting time.

Colva & Benaulim

POP 10,200

Colva and Benaulim, with their broad, open beaches, are not the first place backpackers head – most tourists here are of the domestic or ageing European varieties – but are, as a result, slightly less sceney than Palolem or the beach towns up north. Of the two, Benaulim has the greater charm, though out of high season it sometimes has the sad feel of a deserted seaside town. Perhaps the biggest reason to stay at either is to explore this part of the southern coast (which stretches north as far as Velsao and south as far as the mouth of the Sal River at Mobor), which in many parts is empty and gorgeous. The inland road that runs this length is perfect for gentle cycling and scootering, with lots of picturesque Portuguese-era mansions and whitewashed churches along the way.

Sights & Activities



Goa Chitra

MUSEUM

(☎6570877; www.goachitra.com; St John the Baptist Rd, Mondo Vaddo, Benaulim; admission ₹200; ☀9am-6pm Tue-Sun) Artist and restorer Victor Hugo Gomes first noticed the slow extinction of traditional objects – everything from farming tools to kitchen utensils to altarpieces – as a child in Benaulim. But it wasn't until he was older that he realised the traditional, and especially agricultural, local knowledge was disappearing with them. He created this ethnographic museum from the more than 4000 cast-off objects that he collected from across the state over 20 years (he often had to find elderly people to explain their uses). In addition to the organic traditional farm out back, you'll see tons of tools and household objects, Christian artefacts and some fascinating farming implements, including a massive grinder for making coconut oil, which, ingeniously, attaches to a bull who does all the hard work. Goa Chitra is 3km east of Maria Hall.

The beach entrances of Colva and Benaulim throng with dudes keen to sell you **parasailing** (per ride ₹600), **jet-skiing** (per 15min ₹700), and one-hour **dolphin-watching trips** (per person ₹300).

🛏 Sleeping

COLVA

Sam's Cottages

HOTEL \$

(☎2788753; r ₹500) Up away from the fray, north of Colva's main drag, you'll find Sam's, a cheerful place with superfriendly owners,

spacious, spick-and-span rooms – that were getting a major upgrade when we visited – and pretty and peaceful grounds.

Skylark Resort

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2788052; www.skylarkresortgoa.com; r without/with AC from ₹2300/3000; 🏠🏠) Clean and fresh rooms here have pretty, locally made teak furniture and block-print bedspreads, which gives them much more ambience than the hotel's generic exterior. The pool outside is also pleasant, and you can always just lounge here if you can't deal with the three-minute walk to the beach.

Casa Mesquita

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2788173; r ₹300) With just three rooms that go beyond simple and a phone number that may or may not work, this old mansion on the main coast road is the place to go if you like atmosphere. Goodness knows when rooms were last cleaned, but the elderly inhabitants are friendly, the paint's suitably peeling, and the ghosts of better days linger lovingly in the shadows.

Soul Vacation

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2788144/47; www.soulvacation.in; r incl breakfast ₹6300-7000; 🏠🏠🏠) Tasteful rooms are arranged around gardens and a gorgeous pool area at the sleek Soul Vacation, 400m from Colva Beach. New luxury rooms are capacious and sophisticated in cool blues and whites – totally worth the extra money. It's a relaxing (if slightly pretentious) place to unwind.

La Ben

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2788040; www.laben.net; Colva Beach Rd; r without/with AC ₹1100/1400; 🏠) Neat, clean and not entirely devoid of atmosphere,

THE FOUNDING FATHER OF QUEPEM

When Father José Paulo de Almeida looked out his oyster-shell doors and windows, he saw the Church of the Holy Cross beyond the palm trees out front, the river that functioned as his road into and out of the forest out back, and below, lush gardens elaborately designed with cruciform patterns. The Portuguese priest and nobleman arrived in Goa in 1779 and set up the town of Quepem not long after. Today the **Palácio do Deão** (☎2664029, 9823175639; www.palaciiododeao.com; ☀10am-5pm Sat-Thu) may look a lot like it did when he lived there, with original woodwork, furniture, religious effects and even the garden design all lovingly restored in the past few years by Goan couple Ruben and Celia Vasco da Gama, who researched the mansion's original features in the dean's hometown in Portugal. The Vasco da Gamas also host lunches and teatime on the back verandah; call for reservations and prices. All donations to the Palácio are used to continue restoration work and eventually create a cultural centre here.

Stop by the Church of the Holy Cross, the small and sweet church across the way, while you're here. A taxi from Margao, 14km away, will cost ₹550 round trip, including waiting time, but the bus (₹10, every few minutes) stops just a few minutes' walk down the road.

COLVA'S MENINO JESUS

Colva's 18th-century **Our Lady of Mercy Church** has been host to several miracles, it's said. Inside, closely guarded under lock and key, lives a little statue known as the 'Menino' (Baby) Jesus, which is thought to miraculously heal the sick and which only sees the light of day during the **Fama de Menino Jesus festival**, on the second Monday in October. Then, the little image is paraded about town, dipped in the river, and installed in the church's high altar for pilgrims to pray to. At other times of year, you can still visit the church in the early evening, and if you have any afflictions, you might choose to stop on your way in to buy a plastic ex-voto shaped like the body part in question (similar to those used in Mexican or Eastern Orthodox churches) for offering to the Baby Jesus.

this place is particularly known for its rooftop restaurant.

BENAULIM

There are lots of homes around town advertising simple rooms to let. This, combined with a couple of decent budget options, make Benaulim a better bet for backpackers than Colva.

Palm Grove Cottages

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2770059/411; www.palmgrovegoa.com; d without/with AC incl tax from ₹1600/2000; 🍷) Old-fashioned, secluded charm is to be had amid the dense foliage at Palm Grove Cottages, hidden among a thicket of trees on a road winding slowly south out of Benaulim. Guest rooms are atmospheric (some have balconies), and the ever-popular Palm Garden Restaurant graces the garden. New rooms (₹2700) – more grand than cosy – were being constructed at the time of research.

D'Souza Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2770583; d ₹600) This traditional blue house is run by a superfriendly local Goan family and comes with bundles of homey atmosphere, a lovely garden and just three spacious, clean rooms – making it best to book ahead. There's an imposter **D'Souza Guest House** (☎2771307; Vasvaddo Beach Rd; d ₹500) that's not as homey but also a good option; rooms are compact but airy and clean.

Blue Corner

BEACH HUTS \$\$

(☎9850455770; www.blue-cnr-goa.com; huts ₹1600) The friendly (but overpriced) Blue Corner has simple beach huts (which sometimes lose electricity or running water) on a cosy spot right on the beach. The restaurant (mains ₹80 to ₹150) gets good reviews from guests.

Rosario's Inn

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎2770636; r without/with AC ₹350/600; 🍷) Across a football field flitting with young players and dragonflies, Rosario's is a large

establishment with very clean, simple rooms. Sheets are bright and tucked in tight, kids are playing in the garden, and good vibes abound.

Taj Exotica

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎6683333; www.tajhotels.com; r from ₹20,500; 🍷@🍷) Set in 56 acres of stunning tropical gardens, the Exotica is luxurious but not the freshest Taj we've ever seen.



Eating & Drinking

COLVA

Colva's beach has plenty of shacks offering the standard fare. At the roundabout near the church, you'll find chai shops and thali places, fruit, vegetable and fish stalls, and, at night, *bhelpuri* vendors.

Sagar Kinara

INDIAN \$

(Colva Beach Rd; thalis ₹65-85, mains ₹70-120) A pure-veg restaurant with tastes to please even committed carnivores, this great place is super-efficient and serves up cheap and delicious North and South Indian cuisine. You might have to wait for a table among throngs of Indian families who love it as much as we do.

Leda Lounge & Restaurant

CONTINENTAL BAR \$\$

(mains ₹125-200; ☀7.30am-midnight) Somewhat pricey Western favourites – pizzas, salads, sandwiches – meet fancy drinks – Mojitos, Long Island iced teas – at this comfy, cosmopolitan cafe-lounge. It's a hip environment (relative to Colva), replete with contemporary-print sofas lit by artful woven-basket chandeliers. There's often live music too.

BENAULIM

Malibu Restaurant

INDIAN, ITALIAN \$\$

(mains ₹80-180) With a secluded garden setting full of flowers, cool breezes and butterflies, the relatively inland Malibu is one of

Benaulim's tastier and more sophisticated dining experiences, with great renditions of Italian favourites and live jazz and blues on Tuesday evenings.

Pedro's Bar & Restaurant

GOAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Vasvaddo Beach Rd; mains ₹70-220; ☎9am-midnight) In a large, shady garden set back from the beachfront and popular with local and international tourists alike, Pedro's offers standard Indian, Chinese and Italian dishes, as well as a good line in Goan choices and some super 'sizzlers'.

Johncy Restaurant

GOAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Vasvaddo Beach Rd; mains ₹75-195; ☎9.30am-lam) Like Pedro's beside it, Johncy dispenses standard beach-shack favourites from its location just off the sands. Staff are obliging, and food, if not exciting, is fresh and filling.

i Information

Colva has plenty of banks and ATM machines strung along the east-west Colva Beach Rd, and a post office on the lane that runs past the eastern end of the church. Benaulim has a single '24-hour' Bank of Baroda ATM, which is sometimes locked, and most of its useful services (pharmacies, supermarkets, travel agents) are clustered around Benaulim village, which runs along the east-west Vasvaddo Beach Rd. Internet joints:

Click Nooks (Vasvaddo Beach Rd; per hr ₹30; ☎9am-10pm)

Sify Cyber Café (Colva Beach Rd; per hr ₹30; ☎9am-11pm)

i Getting There & Around

COLVA Buses run from Colva to Margao every few minutes (₹10, 20 minutes) until around 7pm.

BENAULIM Buses from Benaulim to Margao are also frequent (₹7, 15 minutes); they stop at the intersection by Maria Hall. Some from Margao continue south to Varca and Cavelossim. Rickshaws and pilots charge ₹150 to ₹200 for Margao, and ₹50 to ₹60 for the five-minute

ride to the beach. Benaulim gets green points for ubiquitous bicycle rentals for ₹50 per day; scooters will cost you ₹200.

Benaulim to Palolem

Immediately south of Benaulim are the beach resorts of **Varca** and **Cavelossim**, with wide, pristine sands and a line of roomy five-star hotels set amid landscaped grounds fronting the beach. The most luxe is the (somewhat snooty) **Leela Goa** (☎6621234; www.theleela.com; r from ₹25,000; 📶📶📶) at Mobar, 3km south of Cavelossim. Just beyond it, at the end of the peninsula, you'll find one of the most picturesque spots in Goa, with simple beach shacks serving good food. The **Cafe Beach Hut** (mains ₹70-200) is at another pretty beach-shack spot; the turn-off is halfway between Cavelossim town and Mobar, opposite Old Anchor Dalmia Resort.

If you're here with your own transport, you can cross the Sal River at Cavelossim on the rusting tin-tub **ferry**, which will run until the nearby bridge is completed in late 2012-ish. Ferries run approximately every 30 minutes between 6.15am and 8.30pm; they're free for pedestrians and ₹7 for cars, or you can charter the whole damn thing anytime for ₹55. To reach it, turn at the 'Village Panchayat Cavelossim' sign close to Cavelossim's whitewashed church, then continue 2km to the river. On the other side is the very charming fishing village of **Betul**.

From Betul on south to Agonda, the road winds over gorgeous, undulating hills thick with palm groves. It's worth stopping off at the bleak old Portuguese fort of **Cabo da Rama** (look for the green, red and white signposts leading the way), which has a small church within the fort walls, stupendous views and several old buildings rapidly becoming one with the trees. (You can also reach the fort by bus from Chaudi, near Palolem; it stops 5km from the fort.)

Back on the main road there's a turn-off to **Agonda**, a small village with a wide,

PUPPY LOVE

Pick up some gifts, donate clothes and other stuff you don't want, and borrow books from the lending library at Colva's **Goa Animal Welfare Trust Shop** (☎9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat), next to Skylark Resort. You can also learn more about the work of **GAWT** (☎2653677; www.gawt.org; Old Police Station, Curcholem; ☎9am-4pm), which operates a shelter in Curcholem (near Margao) and a smaller **shelter** (☎9665636264) behind the Chaudi bus stand near Palolem, both serving sick, stray and injured animals. Volunteers are welcome at the shelters, even for a few hours, to walk or play with the dogs.

empty beach on which rare olive ridley turtles sometimes lay their eggs. The water here can be unsafe for swimming at times, which has kept Agonda from getting too popular, but it's also not the idyllic secret of south Goa that it once was. Nevertheless, the pace is still slow and mellow. There's plenty of accommodation to choose from, including 10 million beach huts. For a step up, **Chattai** (☎9822481360; www.chattai.co.in; huts ₹1600), at the north end of the beach, has lovely huts with attached bathrooms and front porches.

There's lots of yoga and ayurveda in Agonda – look out for notices – and plenty of beach restaurants serving up the usual grub. *Pav bhaji* and chai can be had at the cluster of tiny eateries beside the church. The excellent organic restaurant **Blue Planet**, formerly of Palolem, was moving to Agonda at research time.

Palolem & Around

Palolem's stunning crescent beach was, as recently as 15 years ago, another of Goa's undiscovered gems, with few tourists and even fewer facilities to offer them. Nowadays, it's no longer quiet or hidden, but remains one of Goa's most beautiful spots, with a friendly, laid-back pace and lots of budget accommodation along the sands. Nightlife's still sleepy here – there are no real clubs, and the place goes to bed when the music stops at 10pm. But if you're looking for a nice place to lay up, rest a while, swim in calm seas and choose from an infinite range of yoga, massages and therapies on offer, this is your place.

If even Palolem's version of action is too much for you, head south, along the small

rocky cove named **Colomb Bay**, which hosts several basic places to stay, to **Patnem Beach**, where a fine selection of beach huts, and a less pretty – but infinitely quieter – stretch of sand awaits.

Note that Palolem, even more so than other beach towns, operates seasonally; many places aren't up and running until November.

Activities

Yoga

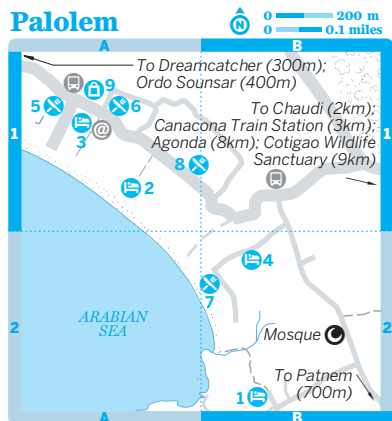
Palolem and Patnem are the places to be if you're keen to yoga, belly dance, reiki, t'ai chi or tarot the days away. There are courses and classes on offer all over town, with locations and teachers changing seasonally. Bhakti Kutir (p833) offers daily drop-in yoga classes, as well as longer residential courses, but it's just a single yogic drop in the area's ever-changing alternative-therapy ocean. You'll find info on local yoga, and even cooking, classes at Butterfly Book Shop (p834).

Beach Activities

Kayaks are available for rent on both Patnem and Palolem beaches; an hour's paddling will cost ₹200 to ₹300, including dry bag. Fishermen and other boat operators hanging around the beach offer rides to beautiful **Butterfly Beach**, north of Palolem, for ₹800 to ₹1000 for two people, including one hour's waiting time.

Trekking

Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary NATURE RESERVE (☎2965601; admission/camera ₹5/25; ☀7am–5.30pm) About 9km south of Palolem is this beautiful, remote-feeling sanctuary.



Palolem

Activities, Courses & Tours

Bhakti Kutir	(see 1)
Sleeping	
1 Bhakti Kutir	B2
2 Ciaran's	A1
3 My Soulmate	A1
4 Palolem Guest House	B2
Eating	
5 Café Inn	A1
6 Casa Fiesta	A1
7 German Bakery	B2
8 Shiv Sai	A1
Shopping	
9 Butterfly Book Shop	A1

Don't expect to bump into its more exotic residents (including gaurs, sambars, leopards and spotted deer), but blazingly plumed birds, frogs, snakes and monkeys are plentiful. Trails are marked; set off early morning for the best sighting prospects from one of the sanctuary's two forest watchtowers, 6km and 9km from the entrance. A rickshaw/taxi from Palolem to the sanctuary will charge ₹500/600 including a couple of hours' waiting time, and two buses (at 1pm and 6.15pm) also go here from Chaudi, making the park's two cottages (₹400 and ₹750) a convenient option.

Goa Jungle Adventure OUTDOOR ADVENTURE
(☎9850485641, 9922173517; www.goajungle.com; trekking/canyoning trips from ₹1200/1500) Run by a couple of very professional, very gregarious French guys, this adventure outfit gets rave reviews from travellers for its trekking and canyoning trips. (Canyoning, as owner Emmanuel puts it, is 'part jumping, part abseiling and part sliding' down a cliff.) Trips run from a half-day to several days, and rafting trips are also occasionally offered. Shoes can be rented for ₹150 per day.

Sleeping

PALOLEM

Most of Palolem's accommodation is of the simple beach-hut variety. Since the huts are dismantled and rebuilt with each passing season, standards can vary greatly from one year to the next. Walk along the beach and check out a few before making your decision; a simple hut without attached bathroom will cost around ₹600.

Palolem Guest House HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2644879; www.palolemguesthouse.com; r ₹750-2300; 📶) Towels here have 'Palolem Guest House' embroidered on them: that's the kind of old-school hotel this is (though reception could use some friendliness training). Comfortable rooms are arranged around a leafy garden just a quick walk from the beach, and the food in the courtyard restaurant is excellent.

Bhakti Kutir HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2643472; www.bhaktikutir.com; cottages ₹2500-4000; 📶) Ensnared in a thick wooded grove between Palolem and Patnem Beaches, Bhakti's well-equipped rustic cottages are a little on the pricey side, but still make for a unique jungle retreat. There are daily drop-in yoga classes (₹200) and ayurvedic

massages, and the outdoor restaurant (mains ₹120 to ₹240), beneath billowing parachute silks, turns out yummy, imaginative, healthful stuff.

Ordo Sounsar BEACH HUTS \$\$\$
(☎9822488769; www.ordosounsar.com; huts ₹2000-2500, without bathroom ₹1500) Beach huts they might be, but set as far north up Palolem beach as it's possible to go, across a rickety bridge spanning a wide creek, this hidden haven makes a cool, quiet alternative to some of the elbow-to-elbow options further on down the sands. Friendly owner Serafin prides himself on the restaurant's Goan dishes.

Ciaran's BEACH HUTS \$\$\$
(☎2643477; www.ciarans.com; huts incl breakfast ₹4000; 📶) You can barely call the gorgeous lodgings here 'huts'. With actual windows, stone floors, full-length mirrors, wood detailing and nicer bathrooms than you'll find in most hotels, they're more like small chalets, all arranged around peaceful gardens right at the beach. It's the perfect balance of rustic and sophisticated. Plus, the wi-fi's free.

Dreamcatcher BEACH HUTS \$\$\$
(☎2644873; www.dreamcatcher.in; huts from ₹2000, without bathroom ₹1000) Stylish huts are peppered around a lush garden on the beach, and yoga's offered every day. There's a four-day minimum stay (but you'd probably stay that long anyway).

My Soulmate HOTEL \$
(Shirley's Residency; ☎9823785250; mysoulmate@gmail.com; r ₹700-800, with AC ₹1000; 📶) A good spot close to the beach (behind Rainbow Travels), and the best hotel name ever.

PATNEM

Long-stayers will revel in Patnem's choice of village homes and apartments available for rent. A very basic house can cost ₹10,000 per month, while a fully equipped apartment can run up to ₹40,000.

Papaya's BEACH HUTS \$\$\$
(☎9923079447; www.papayasgoa.com; huts ₹2000-3500; 📶) Lovely huts head back into the palm grove from Papaya's popular restaurant. Each is lovingly tended to, with lots of wood and floating muslin, as well as a porch, and the staff are incredibly keen to please.

Micky Huts & Rooms

BEACH HUTS \$

(☎9850484884; huts/r ₹400/600) If you don't blanché at basic, this is the best bargain on the whole of Patnem beach, run by the friendliest and most obliging local family you could imagine. There's no signpost: just head for the huge patch of bamboo beside the small stream towards the northern end of the beach, and enquire at the restaurant.

Sea View Resort

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2643110, 9850477147; www.seaviewpatnem.com; r ₹1000-2500, with AC ₹2800-3500; 🍷🍷) The friendly management here, clean rooms – many with balconies, some with kitchens – and neighbourhoody garden setting just a quick walk from Patnem beach makes Sea View a reliable, comfy option.

**Eating**

Both Palolem and Patnem's beaches are lined with beach shacks, offering all-day dining and fresh, fresh seafood as the catch comes in and the sun goes down. Many of these change seasonally, but as of press time, **Ma-Rita's** was winning the readers' choice award.

**Café Inn**

CAFE \$\$

(light meals ₹70-240) This huge, fun semi-outdoor place has loud music, servers in saris and a cafeteria vibe (in a good way). The snacks, shakes, burgers and salads are great, but it's the evening barbecue (from 6pm to 10pm) that will really blow you away: pick your base, toppings, sauces and bread to create a grilled mix-and-match masterpiece.

German Bakery

BAKERY, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(pastries ₹25-80, mains ₹95-170) Tasty baked treats and excellent coffee are the star at the Nepali-run German Bakery, but the Western breakfasts and Italian and Indian dinners are also super good. It also occasionally has yak cheese from Nepal – how cool is that? Oh, and the whole thing is set in a peaceful garden festooned with flags.

Casa Fiesta

MEXICAN, MULTICUISINE \$\$

(mains ₹70-200) Fiesta, like all the restaurants around here, has a little bit of everything on the menu. Its speciality, though, is Mexican, and it makes a valiant attempt at it (and does surprisingly well). The mellow hut ambience is also working, as are the evening barbecues.

Home

CONTINENTAL \$\$

(☎2643916; www.homeispatnem.com; mains from ₹100) A hip, relaxed veg restaurant,

Home also rents out nicely decorated, light rooms (₹1000 to ₹2500); call to book or ask at the restaurant.

Shiv Sai

MULTICUISINE \$

(thalis ₹40-50, mains ₹40-100) A local lunch joint knocking out tasty thalis, including Goan fish and veggie versions, and a good line in Western breakfasts like banana pancakes (₹40).

**Shopping****Butterfly Book Shop**

BOOKSTORE

(☎9341738801; ☎9am-9.30pm Mon-Sat) A great bookshop with some neat gifts and a range of books on yoga, meditation and spirituality.

**Information**

Palolem's main road is lined with travel agencies, internet places, and money changers – but no ATMs. For those, head to nearby Chaudi, which also has a supermarket, several pharmacies and all the other amenities you might need. An autorickshaw from Palolem to Chaudi costs ₹50, or you can walk the flat 2km in a leisurely 45 minutes.

Sun-n-Moon Travels (per hr ₹40; ☎8am-midnight) Quick internet.

**Getting There & Around**

BUS Services to Margao (₹27, one hour, every 30 minutes) and Chaudi (₹5, every 15 minutes), the nearest town, depart from the bus stand down by the beach and stop at the Patnem turn-off. Chaudi has good bus connections, but for Panaji, better to go to Margao and catch an express from there. Buses from Chaudi:

Agonda ₹9, half-hourly

Cabo da Rama ₹18, 9am (return buses depart Cabo da Rama at 3pm)

Gokarna ₹70, 2pm

Karwar ₹30, half-hourly

Mangalore ₹200, two daily

Margao ₹24, every 10 minutes

Mysore ₹310, one daily

Panaji ₹50, 6.20pm and 7.15pm

TAXI & AUTORICKSHAW An autorickshaw from Palolem to Patnem costs ₹50, as does a rick from Palolem to Chaudi. A prepaid taxi from Dabolim Airport to Palolem costs ₹1000, but going the other way, you might get it for ₹800.

TRAIN Many trains that run north or south out of Margao (see p827) stop at the **Canacona Train Station** (☎2643644, 2712790).

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