

# Need to Know

For detailed information, see **Travellers' Helpdesk** on p208

## **i** Quick Facts

### LANGUAGES

Konkani, English, Hindi and Marathi.

### MONEY

There are ATMs in most towns and cities, apart from some sparsely populated areas in the interior. Smaller restaurants and shops don't accept credit or debit cards.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Wi-fi and fixed-line Internet cafes are quite easy to come by. Many coffee shops and hotels provide complimentary wi-fi services.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

Department of Tourism (☎0832 2424001-03; www.goa-tourism.com; Trionora Apartments, Dr Alvares Costa Road, Panjim).

### IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Emergency (police, fire, ambulance, rescue) (☎108

Goa helpline (☎0832 2412121



Goan spices are a popular pick at the flea markets

## When to Go

Goa can get really hot in summer and very wet during the monsoon.

- **November–February; high season:** Evenings are generally very pleasant and the days are comfortably warm. The number of visitors to Goa during this time can be overwhelming and it is best to book tickets, hotel rooms and tables in restaurants in advance.
- **March–June; mid season:** This is when Goa gets uncomfortably hot although Indian tourists arrive for summer holidays. Most hotels and restaurants drop prices. The monsoons build up from end May and its not advisable to swim.
- **July–October; low season:** There is a ban on swimming and trawling for fish in the sea due to the monsoon, however, this is a good time to plan an eco-tourism tour.

## Sample chapter

A majority of restaurants and shacks are closed till mid-October. Prices begin to rise for hotels and restaurants after that. There is still some intermittent rainfall and the weather is largely comfortable. Water sports resume in September, when the swimming ban is lifted.

## First time in Goa

### ADVANCE PLANNING

- **Two months before:** Book air/train tickets. Check for the best bargains on hotels and make bookings. Make a trip plan and talk to a few car rental companies for good deals.
- **One month before:** Make reservations at top restaurants. If you intend to stay in hotels on the beach, definitely reserve beforehand and check for facilities offered. If you are visiting in time for major events like the International Film Festival of India and Sunburn, book tickets online much ahead.
- **Two weeks before:** Begin your packing checklist. Certain medicines may not be available in Goa so make sure you pack a kit. Confirm your booking status at hotels and restaurants.
- **One week before:** Make arrangements for pick-ups at the railway station or airport. If you are renting a car, ask if it can be delivered at your arrival point/hotel. Make a note of all the emergency numbers in Goa.

### WHAT TO PACK

- **Light wash-and-wear clothes:** Best suited for the hot and humid weather in Goa.
- **Comfortable sandals or shoes:** Ideal footwear for beaches and long walks.
- **A dressy outfit:** Some restaurants and clubs have a strict dress code.
- **Sunscreen, sunglasses and mosquito repellent:** Protect yourself against the intense sunshine and insect bites.

## Dos and Don'ts

- ✓ Respect local customs. Dress conservatively if visiting temples and churches.
- ✓ Always carry a photo ID, because the police may ask for it at anytime.
- ✓ Wear a helmet while riding a bike and seatbelt when driving.
- ✓ Bargain hard while shopping at roadside stalls.
- ✓ Keep an eye out for compulsory left turns and speed breakers on the road. Goa has high-speed stretches and any mistake can be fatal.
- ✓ Look out for lifeguards' posts and designated swim areas before taking a dip in the sea.
- ✓ Avoid carrying too much cash or valuables on your person.
- ✗ Do not drink and drive.
- ✗ Do not get boisterous in public areas.
- ✗ Do not litter. You might be fined if you are caught.
- ✗ Do not take photos of people when a service is in progress in the church.
- ✗ Do not ignore any signals from lifeguards at beaches, especially when they whistle.
- ✗ Do not venture out to isolated beaches at night or early in the morning unless you are in a big group.

# 10 Top Experiences



## 1 Old Goa

Old Goa (p138) is an absolute must on every visitor's agenda. With over 10 churches in a small area, this Unesco World Heritage Site is fascinating. One can easily spend a day, if not more, in this erstwhile capital of the Portuguese in India because you will not realise when the sun has set as you admire the architecture of these magnificent churches.



*Old Goa is a delight on its own. We highly recommend taking a guide if you want to understand the nuances of architecture and know the legends.*

Roshan Gomez, research analyst, Dubai

## Sample chapter



## 2 Laze at Benaulim Beach

With a growing number of hotels and new eateries, Benaulim Beach (p162) is slated to be the next big destination in Goa. The beach is clean and the waters are safe for swimming. Spend an entire day lazing by the sea on a sunbed, have beer and seafood delivered to you from the shacks behind and get a foot massage or even a temporary black henna tattoo.



*Gorge on the yummiest crepes for breakfast, followed by a dip in the welcoming blue sea and then bask in happiness under the endless sky!*

Ananda Biswas, senior manager, Mumbai

## 3 Dolphin spotting at Palolem

An increasingly popular activity at the southern beach of Palolem (p178) is to go dolphin watching. Most of the trip operators have a 'no dolphin-no pay' policy, but even if you do not spot one, it feels wonderful to just be out at sea – the experience is almost surreal.



*Cavorting dolphins, aquamarine waters and wild sea breeze all come together for a memorable cruise on the pristine waters of the Arabian Sea.*

Satarupa Chatterjee, product manager, Noida

# North Goa

## Why Go?

From the relentless action at Calangute and Baga, to the quiet charms of Morjim and Ashwem, north Goa has a little of something for everyone. So whether your idea of a vacation is beach-hopping, water sports, partying till the wee hours or simply lazing by the sea, north Goa is where you should be.

## Getting There & Away

**Air:** North Goa is accessed by Dabolim airport at Vasco da Gama. Daily flights from all major cities arrive here.

**Car:** Goa is easily accessible by road from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. There are three roads to Goa from Mumbai – the NH4, NH17 and NH204. From Bengaluru, you can reach Goa either via the NH4 or the NH69 and NH66.

**Bus:** Many visitors take overnight buses to reach Goa from Mumbai and Bengaluru, among other places. You can get off at Mapusa or Panjim, or any other designated drop-off point. Bus fares vary by season and availability. There are car and motorbike rentals near the bus stands.

**Train:** Goa is connected to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru by the Konkan Railway. It is a spectacular journey and it is often difficult to get tickets, so book in advance. The main stations to alight are Margao and Vasco da Gama from where you can take a taxi to north Goa. Even Pernem and Thivim railway stations are a short distance to anywhere in north Goa.

■ Fort Aguada in north Goa offers a panoramic view of the Arabian Sea



# Calangute

## Highlights

- 1 Calangute Beach
- 2 Kerkar Art Complex
- 3 Reis Magos Fort
- 4 St Alex Church

To the south of Baga is its twin resort of Calangute. Its main beach area is crowded, but as one travels southwards, the sands are quieter and the mood more sophisticated and upscale.

### 1 CALANGUTE BEACH

Known as the queen of beaches, Calangute is one of Goa's most sought after stretches of sand and sea. With plenty of resorts, restaurants, shopping areas, tattoo parlours and water sports, this bustling beach is a world unto itself. Perhaps Calangute's most attractive feature is its constantly changing scene as pubs, shops and restaurants of one season make way for newer places during the next, giving the visitor new places to explore.

### 2 KERKAR ART COMPLEX

Art lovers should visit the Kerkar Art Complex, which also houses a small guesthouse and a multi-cuisine restaurant (p70). The gallery showcases sculptures and installation art made by the celebrated artist Subodh Kerkar, as well as works of other selected artists and a few Indo-Portuguese

Calangute is also popular with thrill-seekers



artefacts. The gallery occasionally organises live classical performances and also conducts workshops for artists.

☎0832 2276017; [www.subodhkerkar.com](http://www.subodhkerkar.com); Holiday Street, Gauravaddo

St Alex is one of Goa's oldest churches

### 3 REIS MAGOS FORT

This majestic fort, with lovely views of Mandovi River, was built by Adil Shah in the 15th century, destroyed by the Portuguese, and then rebuilt in the 16th century. It was later used as a garrison, and then as a prison before being abandoned in 1993. It lay in a state of disrepair for many years, but was recently reopened as a cultural centre.

Entry fee, ₹50 on weekdays, ₹10 on Sun and public holidays; 10am to sunset; closed Mon

### 4 ST ALEX CHURCH

One of Goa's oldest churches, St Alex Church stands tall at the end of Chogm Road leading to the beach belt. It is a white structure with a grand, ornate interior. Similar to St Cajetan's Church (p141) in Old Goa, the complex has pretty sculptures and statues, even in the cemetery next to it. There are seven altars and a Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and the pulpit, brought in from the Church of the Rosary in Old Goa.

Chogm Road

## Eating

### **Souza Lobo** Multi-Cuisine ₹₹₹

 0832 2281234; [www.souzalobo.com](http://www.souzalobo.com); Calangute Beach; meal for two ₹1200; 11am to 11pm This is Calangute's oldest and most popular seafood restaurant, best known for its lobster thermidor, grilled baby kingfish, beef roast and stuffed crab. Options for vegetarians are limited and include cauliflower bhajji and sambar. Be prepared to wait for a table because it can get very crowded in the evening.

### **Waves** Multi-Cuisine ₹₹₹

 9881552105; Kerkar Art Complex, Holiday Street, Gauro Vaddo; meal for two ₹1500 If you are looking for authentic sushi, then this is the place to be – there is a huge selection to choose from, and it is always presented with a flair. If you decide to order Goan or Indian, chances are you won't be disappointed as they do a good job with these too.

### **Over the Flames** Multi-Cuisine ₹₹

 9922031806; Crazy Mango Tree, Gauro Vaddo; meal for two ₹700 Over the Flames will spoil you for choice with its extensive menu. It has a range of north Indian dishes, both vegetarian and non vegetarian, and a selection of continental items like steaks, sizzlers and pastas. As with any beach

restaurant, they serve good seafood, which is either cooked in the tandoor or baked in a sauce of your choice.

### **Travel Bar** European ₹₹₹

 9845400223, 9850471639; opposite Tarcar Ice Factory; meal for two ₹1200 You would never expect a peaceful, modern garden setting behind this restaurant's turquoise facade. Travel Bar is frequented by the fashionable young Panjim crowd, as well as the expat community. The food is usually good and the fish among the best in Goa. It is closed on Tuesdays and during the monsoon season.

### **A Reverie** Italian ₹₹₹

 9823174927/9823505550; near Hotel Goan Heritage, Holiday Street; meal for two ₹2000 A Reverie is a fine-dining restaurant with beautiful decor. Service is quick and the staff is helpful. Some of their best dishes include wasabi prawns, smoked salmon with a cucumber jelly, Himalayan trout and the cappuccino soup. Do try their interesting ice creams and sorbets.

### **Viva La Fenice** Italian ₹₹

 9822296218; Shop No 1/281, ABC Farms Beach Resort, Gaura Vaddo, off Candolim–Calangute Main Road; meal for two ₹600 Formerly owned by an Italian couple, Viva La Fenice serves good pizzas and creamy pastas.

### **The Oriental** Multi-Cuisine ₹₹

 0832 3292809; [www.oriental-goa.com](http://www.oriental-goa.com); Holiday Street; meal for two ₹800 This lovely poolside restaurant is great for a romantic candle-lit dinner. The menu is a mixture of a few continental, and of course, plenty of oriental dishes. A very popular dish is their steak with blue cheese sauce. They also have Thai cooking classes; call for details.

### **Infantaria** Multi-Cuisine ₹₹

 0832 3291290; Umta Vaddo; meal for two ₹500 Infantaria is best known for its breakfast menu and Goan desserts like bebinca and perad. The service is efficient and the food doesn't take long to arrive at the table. They usually have offers on beer with food, so ask when placing your order.

### **Plantain Leaf** Vegetarian ₹

 0832 276497; Almita-III Porba Vaddo; meal for two ₹350 Plantain Leaf is a no-frills, pure vegetarian restaurant that also offers set meals and thalis. The menu is simple, with a smattering of south and north Indian dishes, as well as a few reasonably priced Goan and Chinese dishes.

### **Anand Sagar** Vegetarian ₹

 0832 6519697; Naika Vaddo, Main Road; meal for two ₹180 Anand Sagar is a prominent pure vegetarian restaurant, popular for its south Indian food, especially the three-foot long



A Reverie's decor is as striking as its food

paper masala dosa. They also serve authentic south Indian filter coffee. Thalīs are priced at ₹60 and are very filling. There are also some north Indian items on the menu and snack options ranging from various kinds of pav bhaji to idlis.

### **The Tibetan Kitchen** Multi-Cuisine ₹

 0832 22757444; Off Calangute Beach Road; meal for two ₹600 The Tibetan Kitchen offers much more than delicious momos, thukpas and other Tibetan dishes. The menu also has a few continental dishes, such as grilled kingfish with chips and a good selection of salads and north Indian delicacies, like tikkas. The service is quite good and the setting is al fresco.

### **Chef Soumyen's Kitchen** European ₹₹₹

 0832 2276160; [www.chefsoumyenskitchen.com](http://www.chefsoumyenskitchen.com); Luis