

Central Goa



Travellers often make a beeline for the beaches of north or south Goa, but some of the highlights of the state are in central Goa. By exploring this region, you will easily find the pulse of Goa.

Panaji (Panjim) is Goa's most interesting town (calling it a city would be something of an overstatement) and, with its Portuguese Old Quarter (also called the Latin Quarter), a repository of historical and architectural splendour. It is a melting pot of old and new, and a meeting point for culture and commerce – alleyways wind their way between whitewashed churches and boutiques selling international brand-name products. The state capital is idyllically located on the Mandovi River, and cruises (despite their noise and nonsense) offer an opportunity to see Panaji from another perspective. This understated town is one of Goa's highlights.

About 9km to the east of Panaji is Old Goa, one of the finest attractions in the state, and the reason that Goa was known in the 17th century as the Rome of the East. Here, laterite churches and cathedrals (including the basilica containing the almost 500-year-old body of St Francis Xavier) are all that remain of the former Portuguese capital. Old Goa is now a Unesco World Heritage site that travellers and pilgrims are enamoured with.

The temples and spice gardens around Ponda make an interesting day trip from Panaji. Two of Goa's wildlife sanctuaries are also in this part of the state. Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary is well set up for wildlife-spotting, while a 4WD trip through Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary will take you to Dudhsagar, Goa's highest waterfall.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Stay in a colonial heritage hotel and eat out in the Old Quarter in **Panaji** (p82), Goa's most elegant city
- Explore the magnificent churches of **Old Goa** (p100), a bike ride and an era away from modern-day Panaji
- Learn how spices can change your life and dine on a traditional lunch at a **spice farm** (p114) near Ponda
- Take a 4WD trip through the jungle and swim at the base of **Dudhsagar Falls** (p116)
- Float through mangroves in a dugout canoe and look for cranes and kingfishers at **Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary** (p100).



PANAJI

☎ 0832 / pop 93,000

In a country composed of unique cities, Panaji (Panjim) boasts its own brand of originality. The Portuguese left an indelible mark on this small, neat town and their Indian descendants are proud to be continually maintaining and adapting that legacy to suit their ever changing capital.

The architecture of Panaji is the most blatant sign that Goa evolved independently of the rest of India; winding alleyways are lined with Portuguese houses with distinctive red-tiled roofs, wooden window shutters and rickety balconies overhanging tidy streets. The old quarter of Fontainhas particularly evinces the Portuguese history that is spliced into the Indian milieu; plain whitewashed churches are tucked in small laneways that are a short walk from not-so-subtle Hindu temples.

Across Ourem Creek is the business district of Patto, where the tallest buildings are to be found. It is here where the state's prosperity comes into focus as the traffic gets busier and old buildings are replaced with sharp-edged modern constructions.

The Mandovi River laps the northern border of Panaji and at night it becomes a catwalk for the tourist boats that parade up and down.

Though tourists often dart off to the beaches of the north or south, they would do well to linger a little longer in this laid-back capital where the Goan spirit of taking it easy is alive and well. Opening hours are lazy in this slow-paced, low-rise capital and its compact size makes everything comfortably accessible on foot. Panjim makes for a nice prelude or ending to lachadaisical days on the beach. The bustling markets, busy restaurants (some of which will still be surprised to see a foreigner wandering in) and the ebb and flow of day-to-day municipal life offer an easy insight into the life and times of Goa today.

History

Much of the area on which Panaji stands was originally marshland, and for centuries it contained little more than a couple of fishing settlements. In around 1500, shortly after Goa came under the control of the Muslim sultan Yussuf Adil Shah, a fortress was built here to guard the entrance to the

Mandovi. The building later became known as the Idalcao's Palace, Idalcao being a Portuguese corruption of Adil Khan. Little, if anything, of the original structure remains, although today's Secretariat Building stands on the same site.

When the Portuguese nobleman Afonso de Albuquerque arrived in March 1510 he soon took the fort and set about reinforcing it. His efforts were in vain, for in May he was forced by Yussuf Adil Shah to abandon the position and had to wait until November before he could retake it and the city of Govepuri (today's Old Goa). Having done so, Albuquerque personally supervised the rebuilding of the fortress to his own specifications. Accounts of the time say that he was in such a hurry to complete the work before the next Muslim attack that even his officers were pressed into manual labour.

The only other bit of building that took place at this time was the raising of a small church in around 1540 on the site where the huge Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception now stands. Since all ships had to call in at the fortress on arrival in Goa, the church was the first stop for the Portuguese sailors celebrating their safe arrival in India.

The first large-scale land reclamation was completed in 1634 when, under the orders of the viceroy, the count of Linhares, a causeway was built to join Panjim (the Portuguese name for the settlement) and Old Goa, which until that time had been separated by marshland. The 3km route, known as the Ribandar Causeway (from the name of the village at its eastern end), was a far-sighted piece of planning. It made Panjim a feasible alternative as the capital when, years later, Old Goa had to be abandoned because of the repeated cholera epidemics that were decimating the population.

As you drive east from Panaji towards Old Goa today, you can see that the ground is still marshy. The area south of the road is used for saltpans; sea water floods the area and evaporates, leaving yellow-brown deposits of sea salt.

Limited reclamation took place in the late 17th century, though mostly as private projects undertaken by a few wealthy landowners who had chosen the area for their own estates. However, as conditions in Old Goa became more desperate, the land began

THE GOA INQUISITION

When Vasco da Gama sailed for India 'seeking spices and Christians' it was perhaps inevitable that the worst excesses of European religious zeal should reach Goa sooner or later. As it turned out, they arrived sooner.

The Inquisition was re-established in Spain and Portugal in the late 15th century against a background of rumours that many new Christians, including those who had been converted from Judaism, were secretly still observing their old faith. Many escaped the oppression in Portugal by relocating to the colonies overseas.

It wasn't long before the accusations followed them and missionaries began to be scandalised at the lax behaviour of both the new Christians and the other Portuguese settlers. At the request of the missionaries, a deposition of the Inquisition arrived in Goa in 1560. The new tribunal was known as the Goa Inquisition, but its jurisdiction spread across the whole of the Portuguese eastern empire.

Having established itself in the sultan's old palace in Old Goa, the tribunal set about imposing its will. Hindus were forbidden to practise their faith and even the Christian population lived in fear. The tribunal sat regularly in judgment before the long carved table that today is in the Goa State Museum in Panaji, and below the crucifix that now hangs in the Chapel of St Sebastian in Panaji. The more fortunate victims were stripped of their possessions; those who were less lucky were detained indefinitely in the dungeons beneath the Palace of the Inquisition.

Those who were judged guilty underwent the notorious auto-da-fé (act of the faith), a public ceremony, which was conducted in the square outside the Se Cathedral and accompanied by the tolling of the great bell in the cathedral tower. If they failed the test of faith they would usually be burned at the stake. Those who were willing to admit their heresy at the last moment were strangled before the pyre was lit.

The Inquisition was suppressed in Goa in 1774.

to support increasing numbers of refugees from the capital. At first the viceroy and most of the noblemen moved to Panelim, near present-day Ribandar, to escape the epidemics, but when that too became unhealthy a new location was sought.

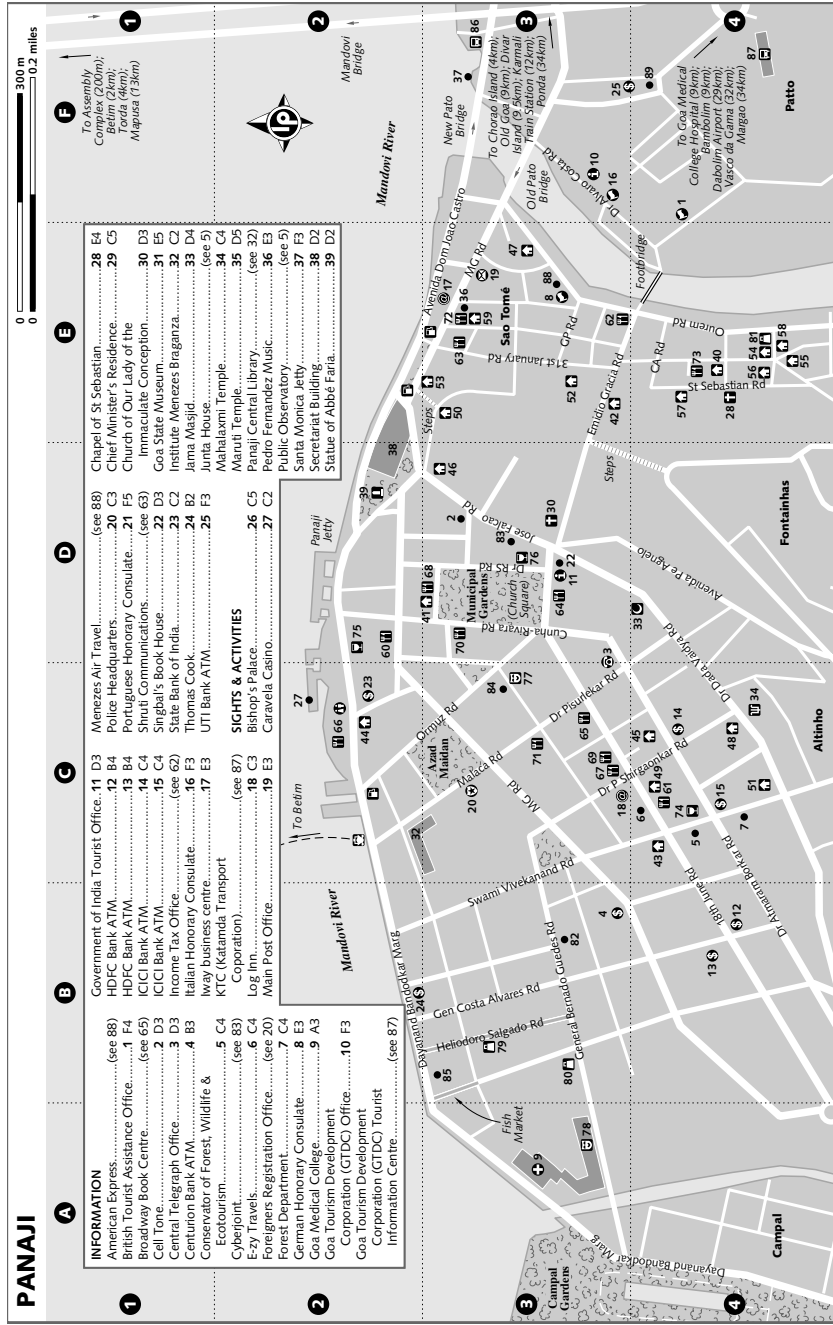
In 1759 the viceroy moved to Panjim, where he took over the fortress as his own residence. Although Mormugao had already been selected as the best location for a new capital, the fact that the viceroy had chosen to live in Panjim rather sealed the issue. Those who could afford it moved to Panjim, and more land was reclaimed.

By the early 19th century the city was taking shape. In 1834, Panjim became known as Nova Goa, and in 1843 it was finally recognised by the Portuguese government as capital of Goa. A spate of building took place to make the new capital worthy of its title. Among the public buildings erected were the army barracks (now the police headquarters and government offices) and the library. In essence though, Goa was a forgotten corner of the Portuguese empire, and lack of money and political interest meant that building work was low-key.

In effect there was little change to the size and shape of the town until Goa's independence from Portugal in 1961. After the departure of the Portuguese, the city was renamed Panaji and a few superficial changes were made. The Secretariat Building became home to the State Assembly and a couple of statues were erected to heroes of the Goan Independence movement. As a sign of Panaji's progressiveness, the flash new Assembly Complex was built on the hill just north of Panaji and inaugurated in 2000. However, not a lot has altered in Panaji. Over the years, new building and road work has taken place, but locals and authorities are aware of retaining the city's unique atmosphere and colonial heritage.

Orientation

Despite the numerous tiny backstreets, Panaji is not a difficult place to find your way around; it's interesting just to wander about and explore at leisure. The main part of the town is sandwiched between the Mandovi River to the north and the high ground of the quaint Altinho district to the south. Dayanand Bandodkar (DB) Marg is



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|----------|---|---|--|--|--|
| A | INFORMATION | B | C | D | E |
| 1 | American Express..... (see 88) | Government of India Tourist Office..... 11 D3 | Menezes Air Travel..... (see 88) | Chapel of St Sebastian..... 28 E4 | To Assembly, Congress, Belim (2km), Torda (4km), Mapusa (13km)..... (see 72) |
| | British Tourist Assistance Office..... 1 F4 | HDFC Bank ATM..... 13 B4 | Police Headquarters..... 20 F5 | Chief Minister's Residence..... 29 C5 | |
| | Broadway Book Centre..... (see 65) | HDFC Bank ATM..... 13 B4 | Portuguese Honorary Consulate..... 21 C5 | Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception..... 30 D3 | |
| | Call Tone..... 2 D3 | ICICI Bank ATM..... 14 C4 | Shruti Communications..... (see 63) | Goa State Museum..... 31 E5 | |
| | Central Telegraph Office..... 3 D3 | ICICI Bank ATM..... 14 C4 | Singhal's Book House..... 22 D3 | Institute Menezes Braganza..... 32 C4 | |
| | Centurion Bank ATM..... 4 B3 | Income Tax Office..... (see 62) | State Bank of India..... 23 C2 | Junta House..... 33 D4 | |
| | Conservator of Forest, Wildlife & Ecotourism..... 5 C4 | ITC (Katamda Transport Corporation)..... (see 87) | UTI Bank ATM..... 25 F3 | Mahalaxmi Temple..... 34 C4 | |
| | Cyberjoint..... (see 83) | Log Inn..... (see 20) | SIGHS & ACTIVITIES | Maruti Temple..... 35 D5 | |
| | E-zzy Travels..... 6 C4 | Main Post Office..... 19 E3 | Bishop's Palace..... 26 C5 | Panaji Central Library..... (see 32) | |
| | Foreigners Registration Office..... (see 20) | | Caravela Casino..... 27 C2 | Public Observatory..... (see 5) | |
| | Forest Department..... 7 C4 | | | Santa Monica Jetty..... 37 F3 | |
| | German Honorary Consulate..... 8 E3 | | | Secretariat Building..... 38 D2 | |
| | Goa Medical College..... 9 A3 | | | Statue of Abbe Farra..... 39 D2 | |
| | Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) Office..... 10 F3 | | | | |
| | Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) Tourist Information Centre..... (see 87) | | | | |

a major boulevard that skirts the Mandovi all the way to the Secretariat Building before becoming Avenida Dom Joao Castro and continuing to the New Pato Bridge in the east and to Campal and Miramar in the west. The Kadamba bus stand is on the eastern side of the town, across Ourem Creek.

Information BOOKSHOPS

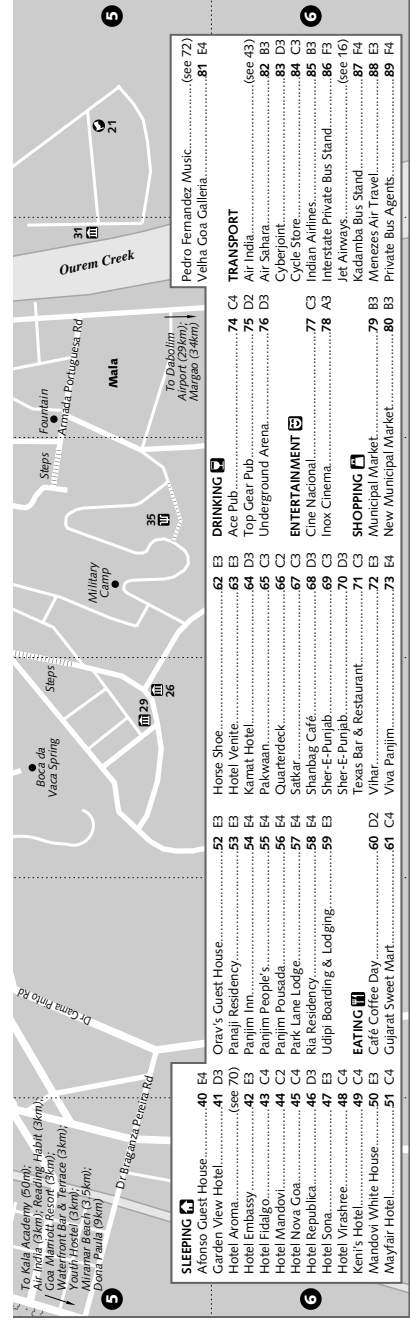
There are some very decent bookshops to be found in the Panaji area. **Broadway Book Centre** (☎ 5647038; 1st fl, Ashirwad Bldg, 18th June Rd; ☎ 9.30am-8pm) Has a good collection of English fiction and books on Goa. Next to Rizvi Tower. **Reading Habit** (☎ 2463057; Dayandkar Marg, Miramar; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Offers a good collection of fiction, particularly Indian literature. There is also a comprehensive travel section selling various guides to the region and many titles focused on Goan history. There's also a small selection of clothing for sale upstairs. It's diagonally opposite the turn-off to the Marriot Hotel on Dayanand Bhandodkar Marg. **Singhal's Book House** (☎ 2425747; singalbookhoue e36@rediffmail.com; Church Square) A modest collection of mostly educational books. There are a few novels and a collection of language guides.

EMERGENCY
Ambulance (☎ 102)
Fire (☎ 101)
Police (☎ 100)

INTERNET ACCESS
Cyberjoint (☎ 5640190, 2435905, 982213835; Jose Falcao Rd; per hr Rs 30) About five computers overseen by a nice family.
Iway Business Centre (MG Rd; ☎ 7am-midnight; per hr Rs 40) Pricier than other places but flashier and with more computers.
Log Inn (Login; ☎ 2228477, 5643708; 1st fl, Durga Chambers; per hr Rs 30; ☎ 9am-11pm) In the same building as Check Inn Hotel, just off 18th June Rd. Also has scanning facilities.
Shruti Communications (per hr Rs 30) Phone calls can be made from here; it's off 31st January Rd, under Hotel Venite.

INTERNET RESOURCES
Corporation of the City of Panaji (www.panjim.org) Maintained by the city council, this is a useful website, for information on all things Panaji.

LIBRARIES
Panaji Central Library (☎ 2436327; Institute Menezes Braganza, Malaca Rd; ☎ 9.30am-1.15pm & 2-5.45pm



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|----------|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| A | SLEEPING | B | C | D | E |
| 1 | Atfeno Guest House..... 40 E4 | Government of India Tourist Office..... 11 D3 | Menezes Air Travel..... (see 88) | Chapel of St Sebastian..... 28 E4 | To Assembly, Congress, Belim (2km), Torda (4km), Mapusa (13km)..... (see 72) |
| | Garden View Hotel..... 41 D3 | HDFC Bank ATM..... 13 B4 | Police Headquarters..... 20 F5 | Chief Minister's Residence..... 29 C5 | |
| | Hotel Aroma..... 42 E3 | HDFC Bank ATM..... 13 B4 | Portuguese Honorary Consulate..... 21 C5 | Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception..... 30 D3 | |
| | Hotel Embassy..... 43 C4 | ICICI Bank ATM..... 14 C4 | Shruti Communications..... (see 63) | Goa State Museum..... 31 E5 | |
| | Hotel Fidalgos..... 44 C2 | ICICI Bank ATM..... 14 C4 | Singhal's Book House..... 22 D3 | Institute Menezes Braganza..... 32 C4 | |
| | Hotel Mandovi..... 45 C4 | Income Tax Office..... (see 62) | State Bank of India..... 23 C2 | Junta House..... 33 D4 | |
| | Hotel Nova Goa..... 46 D3 | ITC (Katamda Transport Corporation)..... (see 87) | UTI Bank ATM..... 25 F3 | Mahalaxmi Temple..... 34 C4 | |
| | Hotel Republica..... 47 E3 | Log Inn..... (see 20) | SIGHS & ACTIVITIES | Maruti Temple..... 35 D5 | |
| | Hotel Sona..... 48 C4 | Main Post Office..... 19 E3 | Bishop's Palace..... 26 C5 | Panaji Central Library..... (see 32) | |
| | Hotel Virashree..... 49 C4 | | Caravela Casino..... 27 C2 | Public Observatory..... (see 5) | |
| | Ken's Hotel..... 50 E3 | | | Santa Monica Jetty..... 37 F3 | |
| | Mandovi White House..... 51 C4 | | | Secretariat Building..... 38 D2 | |
| | Mayfair Hotel..... 51 C4 | | | Statue of Abbe Farra..... 39 D2 | |

Mon-Fri) On the west side of the Azad Maidan, next to the police headquarters.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Goa Medical College (☎ 2458700; Dayanand Bandodkar Marg) About 500m west of the Hotel Mandovi, this has the nearest medical facilities to Panaji. It has a casualty department.

Goa Medical College Hospital (☎ 2458725, 2458700) In Bambolim, 9km south of Panaji on the National Highway (NH) 17. Most of the departments and specialisations of the Goa Medical College are now based here.

MONEY

There are plenty of efficient foreign-exchange places in Panaji. By comparison, visiting the local banks (even the State Bank of India) for foreign exchange is a waste of time. There are a number of ATMs, including a UTI Bank ATM near the Kandamba bus stand.

American Express (AmEx; ☎ 2432960; Menezes Air Travel, Ourem Rd)

Centurion (MG Rd) Its 24-hour ATM accepts international cards.

HFDC (18th June Rd) Its 24-hour ATM accepts international cards.

ICICI (Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd) Its 24-hour ATM accepts international cards.

Menezes Air Travel (☎ 2432960; Ourem Rd) An agent for Amex if you need replacement cheques.

State Bank of India (Dayanand Bandodkar Marg; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) Changes cash and travellers cheques.

Thomas Cook (☎ 2221312; www.thomascook.co.in; 8 Alcon Chambers, Dayanand Bandodkar Marg; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, 10am-5pm Sun Oct-Mar) Pristine and professional, this is the best foreign-exchange place in Panjim. Changes all brands of travellers cheques commission free and gives cash advances on Visa and MasterCard.

POST

Hidden in the lanes around the main post office, there are privately run parcel-wrapping services that charge reasonable prices for their artistic services.

Main post office (MG Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, poste restante 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat) Has a Speedpost parcel service and reliable poste restante. Some services close early so try to get there before 4pm to be on the safe side.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Central Telegraph Office (Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd; ☎ 7am-8.30pm) You can make international telephone

calls from here, but there are plenty of private STD/ISD offices throughout the city charging similar rates. Fax facilities are widely available at the same places.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC; www.goa-tourism.com; Church Square ☎ 223412; Comunidade Bldg; head office ☎ 2224132, 2226728, 2226515, 2436666; Alvaro Costas Rd; Panaji Residency ☎ 2227103; MG Rd) The head office is the most helpful out of all of the offices; staff actually seems happy that you've dropped by. To book tours you will need to go to the GTDC-run Panaji Residency (p93).

TRAVEL AGENCIES

There are several travel agencies where you can book and confirm flights; many are along 18th June Rd.

E-zy Travels (☎ 2435300, 2425742, 2424378; www.ezytravels.com; Shop 8-9, Durga Chambers, 18th June Rd) A professionally run travel agent that books international flights.

Menezes Air Travel (☎ 2432960; www.interserve travel.com; Ourem Rd)

Sights

FONTAINHAS & SAO TOME

The old districts of Panaji are squeezed between the hillside of Altinho and Ourem Creek. The Old Quarter is an attractive area to walk around, with narrow streets, overhanging balconies and a bygone Mediterranean atmosphere.

Fontainhas, which is said to takes its name from the Fountain of Phoenix spring near the Maruti temple, is the further south of the two districts. Originally this area was accessible only from the northern side and was a tangle of buildings constructed on land reclaimed from the marshes. It was not until Emidio Gracia Rd was cut through the hillside from the town centre that the district was joined more directly with the rest of Panaji. The construction of Ourem Rd, which for many years was the main thoroughfare out of Panaji to the south, also helped to open up the area.

Apart from its old-world charm, Fontainhas is notable for the **Chapel of St Sebastian** (St Sebastian Rd), built in 1818. This small whitewashed church at the end of a lovely street contains a number of interesting features – in particular, at the end of the right-hand aisle, a striking **crucifix**, which originally stood in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old

Goa (see The Goa Inquisition, p83). Also worth a look is the building now used by cultural organisation **Fundacao Oriente** (p96). It has been beautifully restored, and in an area where most of the traditional houses are looking a bit battered, this one really stands out.

Located to the north of Fontainhas, the tiny area around the main post office is known as Sao Tomé. The post office was once the tobacco-trading house for Panaji, and the building to the right of it was the mint. The square that these buildings face once housed the town pillory, where justice turned into spectacle when executions took place. It was here that several conspirators involved in the Pinto Revolt (p125) were put to death.

SECRETARIAT BUILDING

The oldest colonial building in Goa, the present-day Secretariat stands where Yusuf Adil Shah, the Muslim sultan who gained control of Goa at the end of the 15th century, had his fortress palace. Before the Portuguese built the main road, this palace was on an island surrounded by the waters of the Mandovi.

After the Portuguese arrived, the palace was reinforced and used as a customs post; it also served as temporary accommodation for incoming and outgoing viceroys. The tradition was that the new viceroy was handed the ceremonial keys to the city of Old Goa under the Viceroy's Arch, and so, while waiting for the ceremony, the new appointee had to stay in Panaji or Reis Magos. Similarly, after handing over responsibility, the outgoing viceroy had to wait outside the capital for his ship home.

After the viceroys abandoned Old Goa, the building was adopted as their official residence from 1759 until 1918, when it was moved to the buildings on the Cabo Raj Niwas instead. From this time onwards the building was used for government offices, and until recently it housed the State Assembly. The assembly now meets in the new **Assembly Complex**, located on the hill across the river.

In a small triangle of lawn next to the Secretariat Building is an unusual **statue** of a man apparently about to strangle a woman. It's a tribute to hypnotist Abbé Faria, one of Goa's most famous sons (p110).

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

This stunning whitewashed church lords it over the Municipal Gardens in the town centre. Although there has been a church on this site since about 1540, the present building dates from 1619; it's a surprisingly large church considering the area was practically uninhabited back then.

Panaji was the first port of call for ships from Lisbon, so Portuguese sailors would visit this church to give thanks for a safe crossing before continuing to Old Goa. By the 1850s the land in front of the church was being reclaimed and the distinctive criss-crossing staircases were added in the late 19th century. It was at about this time that the huge bell that now hangs in the central belfry was brought here. It had previously hung in the tower of the Church of St Augustine in Old Goa, but was removed when the tower started to crumble. The bell is the second largest in Goa (after the Golden Bell in the Se Cathedral in Old Goa).

The church is beautifully illuminated in the lead up to Christmas and during the Feast of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, which culminates on 8 December.

Mass is held here daily in English, Konkani and Portuguese.

MUNICIPAL GARDENS & JAMA MASJID

Panaji's central square is the leafy but unkempt **Municipal Gardens**, also called Church Square (Largo da Igreja). The **Ashokan Pillar** in the centre once had a statue of Vasco da Gama as its crowning glory, but is now topped by the seal of present-day India, four lions sitting back to back atop an abacus decorated with a frieze and the inscription 'Truth Alone Triumphs'. Three relief busts once set into the walls around the garden can now be seen in the Goa State Museum.

The tiny **Jama Masjid**, barely 100m south of the Municipal Gardens, is said to have been built about two centuries ago. It was comprehensively renovated in 1959, though you can still walk past it without even realising it's there. The exterior of the building is a standard square and the entrance blends in with the small shops on either side, but the interior is extremely ornate in the classic Islamic white-marble style.

The grassy **Azad Maidan** (Freedom Park) wouldn't win any prizes at a flower show. It

is centred on a small pavilion, which houses a modern sculpture dedicated to freedom fighter and 'Father of Goan Nationalism' Dr Tristao de Braganza Cunha (1891–1958). The domed edifice formerly held the statue of Afonso de Albuquerque that now stands in the museum in Old Goa.

INSTITUTE MENEZES BRAGANZA & PANAJI CENTRAL LIBRARY

At the northwest corner of the Azad Maidan, the Institute Menezes Braganza and the Central Library occupy a part of the old buildings that used to be the army headquarters. It's worth poking your head through the door, at least to see the entrance hall, which is decorated with four large blue-and-white pictures that cover the whole wall. The scenes depicted on these *azulejos* (painted tiles) are taken from *Os Lusíadas*, an epic poem by Luís Vaz de Camões (p103).

Much of the upper floor of the building is given over to the Institute Menezes Braganza, which was founded in 1871 as a scientific and literary institution. Originally called the Institute Vasco da Gama, it was renamed in 1963 in honour of the champion of the Goan Independence movement, Luís de Menezes Braganza. The institute has a small **art gallery** that contains some rare prints and paintings.

On the lower floor of the building is the **Panaji Central Library** (☎ 2436327; ☎ 9.30am–1.15pm & 2–5.45pm Mon–Fri), the oldest public library in India. Founded in 1832 as the *Publica Livraria*, it is surprisingly rich in old texts, having inherited a substantial amount from the religious institutions of Old Goa when they were forced to close down.

GOA STATE MUSEUM

This large, roomy **museum** (☎ 2458006; www.goa.museum.nic.in; admission free; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri), in a rather forlorn area near the Kadamba bus stand, has a dozen or so galleries featuring Christian art, Hindu and Jain sculpture and bronzes, and paintings (including miniatures) from all over India. The collection is gradually expanding and interesting exhibits include an elaborately carved 16th-century table used in the Goa Inquisition, a pair of huge rotary lottery machines containing thousands of wooden balls (the first lottery draw was in 1947),

and a large wooden chariot used in Hindu fairs during the 18th century.

The first room is a **sculpture gallery** containing Hindu carvings and bronzes dating from the 4th to 8th centuries AD. The second area is a **Christian art gallery** with a variety of wooden sculptures of saints, devotional paintings and some colonial wooden furniture. Also on display are some Jain busts, and three huge relief busts of Luís Vaz de Camões, Afonso de Albuquerque and Dom João de Castro, which originally stood in the Municipal Gardens. Upstairs there's a gallery containing cultural exhibits from various Goan villages, and a gallery of contemporary art from Goa and India.

The WWF has also established a **conservation gallery** in the museum, which provides information about conservation in Goa.

You can ask for a free guided tour; otherwise the uniformed staff will silently follow you around to make sure you don't touch anything.

MARUTI TEMPLE

Dedicated to the monkey god Hanuman, this modern temple is resplendently lit at night. Admire it as you're crossing the Mandovi River from Pato, and enjoy the view over the Old Quarter from its veranda. This temple will get better with age; the new finish of everything means that it is far more spectacular from afar.

The Maruti temple is the epicentre of a four-day festival celebrated in February. The festival usually lingers for 10 days and lasts well into the night. Enormous and colourful statues of Hanuman are placed in the street, and stalls set up all around the Hindu quarter of Mala.

MAHALAXMI TEMPLE

This modern temple off Dr Dada Vaidya Rd is not particularly imposing, or even very interesting, but if you've never visited a Hindu temple before it's worth a look inside and amply demonstrates that among Panaji's ubiquitous whitewashed churches there is a thriving Hindu community. The temple was built in 1818 and is devoted to the goddess Mahalaxmi, the deity of Panaji.

ALTINHO

On the hillside above Panaji is the district known as Altinho. Apart from good views

DETOUR: PEDALLING AROUND PANAJI

If you can get past the insane traffic on the highway between the Mandovi Bridge and the Kadamba bus stand, the area around Panaji offers some enjoyable bicycle touring.

One of the best rides in the state is the 9km trip out to **Old Goa**. The pancake-flat road follows the Ribandar Causeway along the south bank of the Mandovi River; it's a scenic ride passing through the village of Ribandar. Having a bicycle is very handy for exploring Old Goa itself, since the churches and ruins are quite scattered. Ride down to the Mandovi through the Viceroy's Arch and take the ferry across to **Divar Island**; a couple of hours spent exploring this absorbing rural outpost is perfect on a bicycle. You can ride to the southwest corner of the island where there's another ferry back across to Ribandar. Riding back towards Panaji there's yet another ferry point from where you can cross to **Chorao Island** and cycle through the fringes of the **Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary**.

Another rewarding day ride from Panaji is to head west along the Mandovi River (along Dayanand Bhandodkar Marg) through the Campal district, then southwest past Miramar Beach and out to **Dona Paula**, the small peninsula at the mouth of the Zuari River. There's a small hill approaching the peninsula but generally this road is flat and wide and the traffic is light. At the roundabout at Dona Paula, turning right (coming from Panaji) takes you up to Cabo Raj Niwas, while turning left takes you across the elevated suburban area behind Panaji. You can ride all the way east to **Bambolim** on the main highway and then back to Panaji (a round trip of about 22km), although the highway is busy and accident prone. It's also possible to detour north through the suburb at the back of Altinho, emerging on Ourem Rd in Fontainhas – ask locals for directions.

over the city and river, the main attraction here is the **Bishop's Palace**, a huge and imposing building completed in 1893.

The archbishop of Goa came to reside in Panaji early in the 20th century. He initially laid claim to the residence on Cabo Raj Niwas, the promontory that looks out over the confluence of the Mandovi and Zuari Rivers. However, it was not to be. When the Portuguese governor general realised that it was the best property in Goa, the archbishop had to change his plans and move back to Panaji.

Today, Altinho is the most prestigious place to live in Panaji; the pope stayed here during his visit to Goa in 1999.

CAMPAL

The road to Miramar from Panaji runs through the Campal district. Just before you reach the Kala Academy, on the seaward side of the road are the **Campal Gardens**, also known as the Children's Park. The Gardens offer a view over Reis Margo Fort and the boats that cruise along the Mandovi River each evening. Art and music events are also held here.

PUBLIC OBSERVATORY

For anyone interested in checking out the incredibly clear night skies over Goa, the

local branch of the Association of Friends of Astronomy has a **public observatory** (☎ 2425547; 7th fl, Junta House, Swami Vivekanand Rd; ☎ 7–9pm 14 Nov–31 May). The local enthusiasts are only too happy to welcome visitors and explain what you're looking at. The view of Panaji by night is lovely, especially around dusk.

Activities

Panaji is perfect for walking and shopping but if you're here for a while and want to be more active, consider the following options.

CYCLING

Panaji is a great base for cycling trips. Head east to Old Goa and spend a day exploring the sites, or head southwest to Ponda, pausing on your way at Miramar. See above for details of rides around Panaji.

DIVING

Interestingly enough, Panaji is also a good base to launch a diving trip. The well-organised **Barracuda Diving** (☎ 2437001; www.barracudadiving.com) is based at the Goa Marriot Resort in Miramar. Most open-water dives are around Grande and Devbagh Islands. Courses include a noncertificate introductory course (Rs 3500), and a PADI introductory course (Rs 8000), both of which

are run over two mornings and involve pool training and two shallow dives. A four-day PADI open-water course is Rs 15,000; a two-day advanced open-water course costs Rs 10,000; and a 14-day dive master course is Rs 25,000. For qualified divers, two boat dives (departing 8am) costs Rs 2250, including all equipment, snacks and guide supervision.

Walking Tours

NEW PANAJI

From the city's most notable landmark, the **Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception** (1; p87), walk west to the **Municipal Gardens** (2; p87), then north along Dr RS Rd to MG Rd, a busy thoroughfare. On your right is the **Statue of Abbé Faria** (3; p110).

Also to your right you will see the **Secretariat Building** (4; p87), believed to be the oldest Portuguese building in Goa.

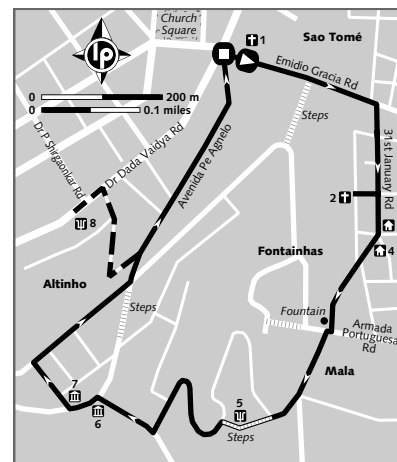
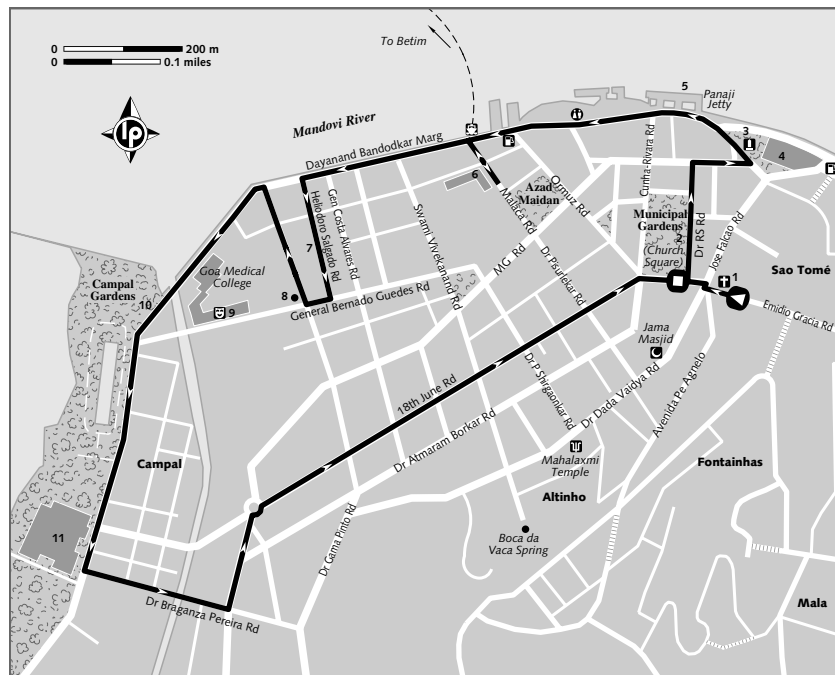
Crossing the road to Dayanand Bandodkar Marg, walk east towards **Panaji jetty** (5), used by old steamers. Continue along the river until you come to the Betim ferry. Opposite this, a short detour southeast brings

you to **Institute Menezes Braganza** (6; p88), with its gallery and library. Continue along the riverfront until you reach the bustling **Municipal Market** (7; p96), which makes for an atmospheric detour. Head back to DB Marg via the **New Municipal Market** (8; p96). If you don't want to see a movie at the glitzy **Inox Cinema** (9; p96), continue past the **Campal Gardens** (10; p89) and call in on the **Kala Academy** (11; p95) to find out what's going on.

If you're not too tired, walk back to the start by turning left onto Dr Braganza Pereira Rd and taking the first major left after 200m. This will take you to a roundabout, where you can turn right onto 18th June Rd for street stalls and boutiques.

WALK FACTS

Start Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception
Finish Kala Academy
Distance 3.5km
Duration 1.5 hours



WALK FACTS

Start Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception
Finish Mahalaxmi Temple
Distance 4.5km
Duration 2 hours

OLD PANAJI

Start at the **Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception** (1; p87) and walk east up the hill along Emidio Gracia Rd. At the four-way junction, where you will find food vendors, turn right onto 31st January Rd. After about 150m, turn right to the quaint **Chapel of St Sebastian** (2; p86). There are many picturesque old buildings down these laneways. Take some time to explore the area.

Continuing down to 31st January Rd, at the very centre of the intersection you will pass the **Panjim Inn** (3; p93) on your left. Break for a drink on the balcony here or at Café Gitanjali in **Panjim Peoples** (4; p93). Continue down the right fork of the road, past Fontainhas' namesake fountain. Continue along this pleasant street until you come across steps on your right leading to **Maruti temple** (5; p88). The balcony of the temple is the ideal place to catch your breath and admire the view over the Old Quarter.

Follow the road behind the temple into the Altinho district. When you reach a junction with a red 'stop and proceed' sign, turn right and continue around to the

Bishop's Palace (6; p89). The building towers over its neighbour, the less grand **Chief Minister's Residence** (7). At the next junction, turn right and wander back downhill to Church Square, or detour down through the more humble residences of Altinho to **Mahalaxmi temple** (8; p88).

Tours

The GTDC (p86) operates manic hour-long cruises along the Mandovi River aboard the **Santa Monica**. You'll see this and other boats – lit up like Christmas trees – swanning around the river every evening trying to outdo each other with the volume of their music. There's a sunset cruise (6pm) and a sundown cruise (7.15pm), both of which cost Rs 100. They include a live band performing Goan folk songs and dances. Drinks and snacks are available at an extra charge. On full-moon nights there is a two-hour cruise at 8.30pm (Rs 150). All cruises depart from the **Santa Monica jetty** (☎ 2438754, 2437496), next to the huge Mandovi Bridge, and tickets can be purchased here or at any GTDC offices.

A couple of private operators, **Paradise Cruises** (Emerald Cruises; ☎ 2431192, 2431215; fax 2223126) and **Royal Cruises** (☎ 2435599), have virtually identical hour-long trips from Santa Monica jetty each evening (Rs 100; 6.15pm, 7.30pm and 8.45pm). Their boats are bigger and rowdier than the **Santa Monica**. Paradise also operates open-sea 'dolphin cruises' (Rs 300, including snacks and drinks) from 10am to noon.

When the GTDC gets the numbers (about 15 people), it also runs a Goa By Night bus tour (Rs 140, including a river cruise and tour of illuminated sights), leaving at 6.30pm from the Santa Monica jetty.

Festivals & Events

Panaji is a city renowned for festivals in a state that is renowned for festivals. Taking part in cultural and religious events is a wonderful way to access a city, so if you can manage it try to time your visit to coincide with something – though do be warned that accommodation becomes more rare and more expensive. The following are some of the highlights in Panaji:

Fontainhas Arts Festival Old homes in the old quarter are converted into galleries. Held between January and March.

Pop, Beat & Jazz Music Festival A two-day festival at the Kala Academy in February.

Maruti Zatra Procession of the monkey god Hanuman and a festive fair. It's held in February at the base of the Maruti temple.

Carnival Started by the Catholics, appropriated by everyone, Carnival is the biggest thing to happen all year in Panaji. The mock King Momo kicks it off with a decree ordering his loyal and obedient subjects to relax and enjoy life. Held in February/March.

Shigmotsav Celebrated all over the state in March/April, but special celebrations are held in Panaji on the full-moon day of March, marked by a float through the streets.

Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Fireworks, a fair and a procession of the long-named lady through the streets on 8 December.

The Kala Academy (p95) seems to be busy all year organising various classical dance, folk music, drama, singing, food and culture events. They really kick into action around November and December. Contact the Kala Academy if you want to find out what's happening when you're in Panaji.

Sleeping BUDGET

Hotel Republica (☎ 2224630; Jose Falcao Rd; d Rs 300) There is no air-conditioning, no hot water and only squat toilets, but there is a great elevated balcony and years worth of character. If Harry Potter books were set in Goa, this would be the Weasleys' house. What it lacks in cleanliness and courtesy it makes up for in quirkiness.

Mandovi White House (☎ 2223928; 5552004@yahoo.com; 31st January Rd; s/d with AC Rs 350/450, without AC Rs 300/400; 🚽) Slightly off the road and slightly off the rails is the White House. The personality of the proprietor, Mr Vincent de Souza, is glued to the walls in the form of random newspaper clippings and various paraphernalia – a testament to the subjectivity of taste. His business card boasts a '10am cutout time'...perhaps when guests are required to help assemble newspaper clippings. Prices can more than double over peak season.

Hotel Embassy (☎ 2226019, 5622054; Emidio Garcia Rd; s/d/tr Rs 375/550/750) Rooms here are far nicer than the building's exterior would suggest. Bathrooms have hot water and are tiled, though not all have sit-down toilets. Some of the rooms at the front of the building are bright and comfortable. All rooms

are Rs 1000 in peak season but discounts are cheerfully forthcoming outside of that.

Orav's Guest House (☎ 2426128, 5640103; 31st January Rd; s/d Rs 250/450) Rooms are not as rickety as you would expect in this price range. All have a bathroom with hot water and are good value.

Park Lane Lodge (☎ 2227154; d without bathroom Rs 515) This seems like too elegant a building to be included in a budget section, but it fits. Unfortunately the cluttered character of the Park Lane Lodge doesn't spill into the rooms themselves, which are quite bland. Though the rooms are makeshift and overpriced, they are clean and the family that runs the lodge is great. It also boasts a lovely location in Fontainhas.

If you're really on a budget then consider these absolute shoestring options:

Youth Hostel (☎ 225433; Baywatch, Dona Paula Jetty Rd; dm member/nonmember Rs 40/60) Cheap but an 11pm lights-out rule gives it a boarding-school feel. It's 3km outside of Panaji in Miramar.

Udipi Boarding & Lodging (☎ 2228047; Sao Tome; d without bathroom Rs 100) Close to the centre of town but it's a tad grimy.

MIDRANGE

Afonso Guest House (☎ 2222359; d with bathroom Rs 800) Afonso looks like hotels are supposed to look in the beautiful Old Quarter. Its namesake is an extremely houseproud manager, who has put a great deal of care and effort into creating this place. Rooms with hot-water bathrooms are extremely good value and there is a lovely rooftop terrace with a tiled mosaic floor, where you can sit and enjoy a drink in early mornings and late afternoons. There isn't a speck of dust to detract from the elegant design.

Mayfair Hotel (☎ 223317, 2230457, 2225772; mayfair@sancharnet.in; Dr Dada Vaidya Rd; s Rs 650, d with/without AC Rs 950/800, s/d/tr deluxe Rs 750/900/1000; 🚽) The standard rooms here are light and airy; all rooms have bathrooms and some even have balconies overlooking the street. Be warned though that the street noise can be unrelenting and you might be better off with a room opening onto the garden at the back. The reception area has a mosaic on the wall depicting life in rural Goa.

Hotel Sona (☎ 2222226, 2223973, 2420240; www.hotelsona.com; Ourem Rd; s without bathroom Rs 250, d with bathroom Rs 600, r deluxe Rs 960) Prettily located near the river in a nice part of town. Not all

of the 30 rooms of this four-storey building face the river, so make sure you check it out first. Cheaper rooms have a common bathroom with spacious showers, some of which have a coloured glass window that makes you feel as though you are bathing in the attic of a cathedral.

Hotel Virashree (☎ 2226656; tchaitanya@hotmail.com, virashree@hotmail.com; Dr Dada Vaidya Rd; s/d standard without AC Rs 400/425, deluxe with AC Rs 775/795; 🚽) Across the road from Mahalaxmi Temple, rooms at Hotel Virashree are cleaner and more modern than the exterior of the building would lead you to believe. It's hard to beat the value of the standard rooms with a bathroom and TV. Windows are also quite large and let in natural light, but there isn't the same smooth service you'll find at the nearby Mayfair.

Keni's Hotel (☎ 2224581, 2224582; fax 2435227; 18th June Rd; s Rs 412, d Rs 541-644, ste Rs 670) This is good value, particularly given its location. Keni's Hotel is old but well kept, with no dank, crusty smells. Rooms are spacious and have TV and hot water. The hotel is accessed from a tiny lane off 18th June Rd.

Ria Residency (☎ 2220002, 2420002, 2430002; prajakt@hotmail.com; r Rs 800) The linear design of the brand new Ria Residency lacks the charm of the Panjim Inn across the road. However, given the facilities, cleanliness and location, this is a well-priced option. The outdoor terrace is a nice touch too. Diagonally opposite Panjim Inn, off 31st January Rd.

Panaji Residency (☎ 2227103; MG Rd; d with/without AC Rs 1050/790, r deluxe Rs 1400; 🚽) Run by the GTDC, this is an unremarkable place

but it's centrally located and has a decent restaurant. This is also the starting point of many GTDC tours.

Why anyone would want a bird's-eye view of the Municipal Gardens is a mystery, but if you're after accommodation at this central location you could try the following places:

Hotel Aroma (☎ 2423519; Cunha-Rivara Rd; d with AC Rs 650) Spacious and airy rooms. Buckets of hot water for washing are brought on request.

Garden View Hotel (☎ 2227844; Municipal Gardens; d with/without AC Rs 500/400; 🚽) Though the rooms are tired, they have the full gamut of facilities and are well priced. Discounts are forthcoming during quiet times.

TOP END

Panjim Inn (☎ 2226523, 2435628, 2228136; www.panjiminn.com; E212 31st January Rd, Fontainhas; s/d Rs 1440/1620, r deluxe Rs 1845, ste Rs 2610) One of the most charming places to stay in Panaji, this beautiful mansion from the 19th century has a large 1st-floor veranda with the fragile elegance of a Chinese pavilion. Some of the spacious rooms have four-poster beds, and all of them have colonial furniture and individual character. If you're interested in staying at the Panjim Pousada or the Panjim People's, you can also come here; they're all run by the same aesthetically gifted people.

Panjim Pousada (☎ 2226523, 2435628, 2228136; www.panjiminn.com; 31st January Rd, Fontainhas; s/d Rs 1440/1620, r deluxe Rs 1845, ste Rs 2610) Down the road from the Panjim Inn, the nine divine, colonial fantasy rooms at Panjim Pousada are set off a stunning central courtyard that displays (and sells) art. Various doorways

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Panjim People's (☎ 0832-2226523, 0832-2435628, 0832-2228136; www.panjiminn.com; E212 31st January Rd, Fontainhas; d standard/slightly larger Rs 4950/5400; 🚽) From the people who brought the Panjim Inn to the Old Quarter comes Panjim People's, the most decadent of them all. With the same intention of old-world revival, the People's is a step up in elegance from other options in the area.

If you're lucky enough to get one of the four bright and airy rooms in this landmark of Fontainhas, you're in for a travel treat. Rooms truly do justice to the proud exterior of this converted heritage building. Decadent four-poster beds, colonial-era furniture and tiled mosaic bathrooms allow you to immerse yourself in luxury away from the entire modern world, despite modern amenities like a fridge and TV. The larger room at the back of the building has an ornately carved antique rosewood bed head, which is an elegant centrepiece. Each of the four rooms has a slightly different character, though all have private balconies overlooking picturesque fragments of the Old Quarter. Downstairs is Café Gitanjali, where you can enjoy romantic art over a romantic drink.

and spiral staircases lead to the rooms; those on the upper level are by far the best.

Goa Marriot Resort (☎ 2463333; fax 2463300; Miramar Beach; d US\$150-340; 🏠 📺) Unquestionably one of the best places to stay in Goa, the Marriot Resort is expertly choreographed from the word go, with the five-star fantasy beginning with the foyer. The pool and garden area isn't enormous, but it is enticing. Another asset of the Marriot is the Waterfront Terrace & Bar (opposite), which is perfectly integrated into the design of the pool area.

Hotel Fidalgo (☎ 2226291; info@hotelfidalgo-goa.com; 18th June Rd; s/d/ste Rs 1800/2300/8000; 🏠 📺) After a complete revamp, Hotel Fidalgo has become the most modern hotel in central Panaji. There is a food 'enclave' with various restaurants, a swimming pool, an Ayurvedic health spa and various shops. It's polished and professional without being hoity-toity. Add a luxury tax of 10%.

Hotel Mandovi (☎ 2426270, 2224405; www.hotelmandovigoa.com; DB Marg; r standard Rs 1550-2000, s with river views Rs 2650-4000, d with river views Rs 3050-5000) In the spirit of former colonial capitals that have an old-style hotel facing the river (think the Raffles in Singapore and the Strand in Rangoon), the Mandovi is Panaji's not-so-grand contribution. Its 53-year-old charm is starting to wither to the point that its location is really the drawback. However, the on-site facilities such as restaurants, a bakery and a small bookshop also give it a point of distinction from its newer rivals.

Hotel Nova Goa (☎ 2226231, 2226237; www.hotelnovagoa.com; Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd; s/d Rs 1600/2100, ste Rs 2500-3000; 🏠 📺) There are 88 rooms at the Nova Goa and a pool hidden away behind the main building, which is done in the style of a giant concrete toilet block. The rooms are quality cookie cutter.

Eating

Panaji is great for eating out, mainly because it doesn't have the strips of tourist-oriented places that are rife along the coast. Here instead are quality restaurants that the locals love. With some exceptions, most places only start serving dinner at around 7pm so try not to work up an appetite too much earlier.

Hotel Venite (☎ 2425537; 31st January Rd; mains Rs 80-125; 📺 Tue-Sat) This elegant affair has

both Australian and Portuguese wines, and a versatile food menu that ranges from pepper steak to Portuguese fish and spaghetti Napolitaine. Drinks are reasonable; a Kingfisher is the standard Rs 30. Be drawn in through the shell-mosaic entrance, then step upstairs to the seven rickety candlelit balconies overhanging the street (though you won't be comfortable if you're a large person). The whole restaurant is basked in the warm orange glow that all good meals should be garnished with. The food isn't as sublime as the atmosphere makes you anticipate, though.

Vihar (MG Rd; mains Rs 15-80, juices Rs 25-30; 📺 7am-10pm) Vihar is a justifiably popular place serving South and North Indian food and Chinese to a constant stream of locals and clued-in backpackers. A big plus is the juice bar that cranks out some winning concoctions. The whole menu is vegetarian.

Viva Panjim (☎ 2422405; 178 31st January Rd, Fontainhas; mains Rs 100; 📺 noon-3pm & 7-10.30pm) This is a long-standing favourite located behind Mary Immaculate High School. Despite its popularity it has thus far resisted the urge to spill out onto the street. There are only very limited tables, the nicest being the three outside in the picturesque laneway on which the restaurant cosily sits. The restaurant dishes out elegant Indian and Chinese fare.

Horse Shoe (☎ 2431788; E245 Ourem Rd; mains Rs 60-195; 📺 noon-4.30pm & 7-10.30pm) Reservations are recommended at this stylish Portuguese-Goan restaurant. The elegant but simple atmosphere is presided over by the owner-manager-chef who takes great personal pride in this project.

Shanbag Café (Municipal Gardens; mains Rs 10-35; 📺 7am-8pm) This small vegetarian restaurant with orange décor is very friendly. It's clean and well organised, and the locals love it. This is the perfect place to sample Goan fare because the straightforward menu has handy photos and the friendly staff are good picking out food for confused foreigners. Try *idli* (round steamed rice cakes) for breakfast with chai; it will set you back around Rs 20. A full *paratha* meal, where the flat bread is served with an array of dishes or stuffed with meat and vegetables, costs around Rs 30.

Sher-e-Punjab (☎ 2425657; www.sher-e-punjab.com; 18th June Rd; mains Rs 40-100; 📺 11.30am-3pm,

6.30-10pm) This is where local families go when they want to dine out. It has a great selection of food for reasonable prices. There is another branch on the first floor of the Hotel Aroma, though the courtyard at the one on 18th June Rd is a perfect accompaniment to a meal.

Satkar (18th June Rd; mains Rs 20-50; 📺 11am-3pm & 6.30-10pm). A favourite among locals, Satkar is a great place to dine. Its vegetarian meals are splendidly cheap and tasty, and you won't find a better veg thali (traditional all-you-can-eat meal; Rs 25) in Panaji. Even the Chinese dishes are comparatively good and there is an interesting array of *faloodas* (rose-flavoured milk drinks).

Pakwaan (☎ 2421442; Vagle Vision, 18th June Rd; dosas Rs 35, mains Rs 30-80) A great budget restaurant that local families adore, Pakwaan has all the classic Indian fare plus sandwiches, salads and pizzas. There are some unusual fusions on the menu, such as 'American chopsuey' dosa (paper-thin lentil-flour pancake) and dried-fruit pizza!

Quarterdeck (☎ 2432904, 2432905; mandovi_goa@sancharnet.in; Dayanand Bhandodkar Marg, Mandovi Riveria; 📺 3-11pm) This is a great place to sit and watch the party boats doof-doof by. The self-proclaimed 'Super Multicuisine Restaurant' has a fantastically laid-back atmosphere, and the food is fantastic and not too shamefully priced. The Goan prawn curry (Rs 125) is recommended.

Texas Bar & Restaurant (☎ 5643130, 2226077; 1st fl, Hotel Neptune; mains 80-150; 📺 11am-3pm & 7-9pm) There is some heavy meat-based fare here, and a lengthy cocktail list that doesn't suit the Wild West theme as well as the mutton does. It offers a diverting respite from the streets and, for your further displacement, waiters wear tasselled leather waistcoats and sometimes even cowboy hats.

Waterfront Terrace & Bar (☎ 2463333; Goa Marriot Resort; buffet breakfast/lunch/dinner Rs 375/500/849; 📺 24hr) The design of this splash-out coffee shop and restaurant cleverly uses glass so that the indoor eating area blends to the outside pool area of the Goa Marriot Resort (opposite). For true indulgence, try a buffet or Sunday brunch.

Café Coffee Day (Arthur Viegas Bldg; 📺 9am-11pm) This popular chain café is not too far from the Municipal Gardens, and has a small balcony where you can sit lazily, drink your iced coffee and eat your chocolate cake.

Gujarat Sweet Mart (Gujarat Lodge; ☎ 2224367, 2224567; 18 June Rd; drinks Rs 10-30) With the perfect atmosphere to educate yourself in the world of Indian sweets, Gujarat Sweet Mart is a great place to point at and eat an overwhelming array of treats, some freshly made on the premises. There's also a great array of drinks such as sweet lassis and thick milk shakes, which range in flavour from basic varieties through to mocha almond and ginger lemon.

Kamat Hotel (5 Church Square; mains from Rs 10-60; 📺 8am till late) Kamat is a popular choice for locals. The vegetarian menu is enormous, with mostly Indian and a selection of Chinese dishes; there are also some sandwiches on the menu, plenty of ice cream, and a great drink selection. The upstairs eating area is an air-conditioned spotless cocoon away from the streets.

Drinking

There isn't much of a drinking scene in Panaji; rather than heading for pubs, the trend seems to be to linger at restaurants that stay open quite late. For those who are craving a more active atmosphere, the joy-riding boats that thump their way up and down the Mandovi are as close as you'll get; see p91 for more information. There are a few hole-in-the-wall pubs around town, though many have a very seedy feel to them. The following pubs all have a slightly dark, predominantly male, but ultimately comfortable atmosphere.

Top Gear Pub (Dayanand Bhandodkar Marg; 📺 11am-3pm & 7pm-midnight) Don't take more than 10 friends or you won't fit inside. This nanopub, with all the detail of a real-live Irish drinking hole, has possibly been designed with real-live leprechauns in mind.

Ace's Pub (Swami Vivekanand Rd; 📺 7pm-11pm) A two-tier place, opposite Junta House, with the vibe of a dingy cocktail bar.

Underground Arena (☎ 2228305; Hotel Manvin's, Church Square; 📺 8.30pm-11pm) This is the most spacious place for a drink, with a big TV that implies that if there are sports to be watched, they should be watched here.

Entertainment

Kala Academy (☎ 2223280; www.kalaacademy.org; Dayanand Bhandodkar Marg) On the west side of the city at Campal, the Kala Academy is Goa's premier cultural centre, with a programme

of dance, theatre, music and art exhibitions throughout the year. Many performances are in Konkani, but there are occasional English-language productions. Kala Academy is reputed to be a prestigious place to study; see p214 for more information.

Fundacao Oriente (☎ 2230728; 175 Filipe Neri Xavier Rd, Fontainhas; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) Holds arts exhibitions and musical events in a bid to promote cultural exchange between Portugal and Goa.

Caravela Casino (☎ 2234044/7, 5642844/7, 2439160; goacas@sancharmet.in; Fisheries Jetty, Dayanand Bandothkar Marg) This floating casino makes for an interesting night out. There is a sunset cruise (adult/child Rs 500/250, 5.30pm to 8pm) and a dinner cruise (9pm to 10pm), as well as a daytime cruise (Rs 1800). Entering the gambling section of the boat costs an extra Rs 200. Be warned there is a dress code: no shorts, sandals or three-quarter pants are allowed. Prices include domestically produced drinks, though imported drinks cost more. Disembarking is easy, with row boats taking people on and off the boat.

Inox Cinema (☎ 2420999; www.inoxmovies.com; Old GMC Heritage Precinct, Campal; tickets Rs 50-120) Congratulations movie buffs, you have come to *the* best place in Goa. This recently built cinema is behind Goa Medical College and screens both Bollywood and Hollywood movies (in English). It's one of those by-products of globalisation that makes you think you could be anywhere in the world. And just when you thought the seats couldn't get any more comfortable, you realise that they recline. Go crazy at the snack bar (at last popcorn that doesn't cost more than the movie!) and enjoy.

Waterfront Terrace & Bar (☎ 2463333; Goa Marriott Resort; 🕒 7am till late) The very indulgent, though comfortable, Waterfront Terrace & Bar has theme nights every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. These are often musical evenings that stretch on long after dinner has ended. At the time of research, Saturday night was the designated jazz night (Rs 800). Contact the Marriott to find out what's on.

For a raw cinema experience you could go to Cine Nacional, which plays mostly 'adult' movies and has a seedy feeling to match. Movies are shown at 10am, 3pm, 6.15pm and 9.45pm.

Shopping

The main shopping strip for more upmarket shopping is 18th June Rd; it is livelier at night, when the touts and the shoppers come out. Here you will find high-class souvenirs and boutique clothing stores, as well as shops selling dried fruits and nuts. On MG Rd near Delhi Darbar are shops selling imported brands, including Levis, Lacoste, Wrangler, Nike and Benetton, for about a third of the price you would pay in Europe.

Municipal Market (🕒 from 7.30am) The atmospheric place, where narrow streets have been converted into covered markets, is relatively ordered. There's a fresh produce area, in addition to clothing stalls and some very small eateries. The fish market is a particularly interesting strip of activity.

New Municipal Market (🕒 from 7.30am) Near the Municipal Market is this recently established market. You'll find everything from fruit and vegetables to tailors, but you won't find as much atmosphere as at the Municipal Market. Give it a few years and perhaps all the shops will be occupied.

Pedro Fernandez Music (19 D Joao Castro Rd) This lovingly filled shop, next to Vihar restaurant, sells traditional Indian instruments such as drums and sitars.

Velha Goa Galeria (☎ 2426628; www.constavin.com; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm) Head here for some very high-class souvenirs. The gallery has beautiful mosaic and pottery items, none of which are cheap but most of which are lovely.

Getting There & Away

AIR

For travel agencies that handle ticketing and flight confirmation, see p86. The following airlines have offices in Panaji:

Air India (☎ 224081; 18th June Rd) Next to Hotel Fidalgo.

Air Sahara (☎ 2230237; General Bernado Guedes Rd)

Indian Airlines (☎ 2237821; ground fl, Dempo Bldg, Dayanand Bandothkar Marg; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) On the road out to Miramar.

Jet Airways (☎ 2438792; Shop 7-9, Sesa Ghor, Patto Plaza, Dr Alvaro Costa Rd) Near the GTDC office.

BOAT

The passenger-vehicle ferry across the Mandovi River to the fishing village of Betim is a useful ferry service for the northern beaches. It departs from the jetty on Dayanand Bandothkar Rd roughly every 15 minutes between

6am and 10pm (passenger/motorcycle free/Rs 4). From Betim there are buses to Calangute and Candolim via Reis Magos.

BUS

State-run bus services operate out of Panaji's **Kadamba bus stand** (☎ 2438256). Fares vary depending on the type of bus, but the destinations include Hospet (Rs 165, nine hours), Bangalore (Rs 390, 14 hours), Mangalore (Rs 263, 11 hours), Mumbai (15 to 18 hours), Mysore (Rs 345, 17 hours) and Pune (Rs 326, 12 hours). There are also services to Londa (Rs 35), from where you can get a daily direct train connection to Mysore and Bangalore, and services to Hubli (Rs 65, six hours) and Belgaum (Rs 55, five hours). For Hampi, you're better off taking the bus rather than a bus-train combination. You can take the daily government-run bus to Hospet (9km from Hampi) and then a local bus to Hampi from there, but there are plenty of private buses, including overnight sleepers, on this route.

Many private operators – with luxury and air-con buses to Mumbai, Bangalore, Hampi and other destinations – have offices outside the entrance to the Kadamba bus stand. Most private interstate buses arrive and depart from the separate interstate bus stand next to the Mandovi Bridge, although some arrive and depart from the actual ticketing offices.

A reliable booking service is **Paulo Tours & Travel** (☎ 2438531; www.paulotravels.com; G1, Cardoza Bldg), just north of the Kadamba bus stand. It has sleeper coaches to Hampi (Rs 450), Mumbai (Rs 600) and Bangalore (Rs 375), though the prices rise for the peak season. The buses aren't the pinnacle of comfort – they can be cramped, and typically erratic Indian driving and rough roads make sleep a lottery. If you're on a sleeper, check whether you're sharing with anyone. Ordinary buses (without air-con) cost Rs 275 to Mumbai and Rs 350 to Hampi.

Luxury buses can also be booked through agents in Margao, Mapusa and the beach resorts, but they still depart from Panaji.

It's possible to get buses to destinations further afield, including to Cochin and Chennai, but they are infrequent and these trips are better tackled by a combination of train and bus or by breaking the journey and changing buses.

Panaji is also a hub for local buses heading in all directions. For the southern beach resorts you'll have to change in Margao, and for points north of Calangute, you'll generally have to change in Mapusa. Some of the more popular bus routes within Goa include the following:

Calangute Frequent services throughout the day and evening (Rs 7, 45 minutes).

Mapusa Frequent buses run to Mapusa (Rs 7, 25 minutes), and there's a separate ticket booth at the Kadamba bus stand for express services.

Margao Minibuses to Margao (ordinary/express Rs 12/17, 45 minutes) leave from platform 11. Change at Margao for the southern beaches.

Miramar & Dona Paula Frequent buses ply this route (Rs 4, 20 minutes).

Old Goa Direct buses to Old Goa (Rs 4, 25 minutes) leave constantly.

Ponda Regular buses to Ponda (Rs 8, 55 minutes) run via Old Goa.

Vasco da Gama Minibuses to Vasco da Gama (Rs 17, 45 minutes) leave from platform 10.

TAXI

Autorickshaws, taxis and motorcycle taxis gather at several places in Panaji, including the Kadamba bus stand and around the Municipal Gardens. Typical taxi fares from Panaji include Rs 200 to Calangute, Rs 200 for a return trip to Old Goa with waiting time, and Rs 450 to Margao.

TRAIN

The train is a far more comfortable and faster option than the bus for Mumbai and Mangalore. Panaji's nearest train station is Karmali (Old Goa), 12km to the east. You can catch a bus to Old Goa and then an autorickshaw. Otherwise, taxis charge around Rs 80 to/from the station, and autorickshaws charge Rs 50. The **Konkan Railway reservation office** (🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) is on the 1st floor of the Kadamba bus stand. The travel agencies just north of the bus stand can also make train bookings.

Getting Around

Given the frequently one-way flow of the traffic, it's often more efficient to walk than to take a taxi or autorickshaw. Distances aren't great and this is one of the nicest towns in Goa to walk through. However, if you do want to hire a motorcycle or scooter, Panaji is a good place to do so.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

There are no bus services from the airport to Panaji, other than those for upmarket hotel guests. Prepaid taxis from Dabolim Airport cost Rs 390 and take around 40 minutes. It will work out cheaper if you can arrange to share the taxi with others. Alternatively, when you step out of the airport building, turn left and walk to the main road, where you can catch a bus to Vasco de Gama (Rs 4, every 15 minutes or so). From the minibus stand at Vasco you can take a direct bus to Panaji (Rs 17, 45 minutes) or Margao (Rs 15, 45 minutes). Queues for the tickets can be long but are orderly. Buses leave between 7.20am and 7pm when they are full (every 10 to 15 minutes).

BICYCLE

Opposite Cine National there's a **cycle store** (☎ 2222670, 2226569; fax 5640219), which rents out old Chinese push-bikes. Prices start at Rs 6 per hour and Rs 60 per day.

MOTORCYCLE

The most prolific rental presence in town is Queen Paulo Travels, which can actually advertise because it is registered (ie legally operating). You'll see signs outside their various agents. Two reliable places to go are Hotel Aroma (p93) and Mayfair Hotel (p92), which both organise Queen Paulo bikes. A Honda Activa will cost around Rs 250, and an Enfield around Rs 400. At busier times prices will fluctuate by Rs 50 or so. Another choice is friendly **Cyberjoint** (☎ 5640190, 2435905, 9822131835; Jose Falcao Rd), which rents out Hondas for Rs 250 per day. The other option is to ask around on the street; try the Municipal Garden area or near the general post office – one of the taxi drivers should be able to help you.

AROUND PANAJI**Miramar**

☎ 0832

Miramar, 3km southwest of the city (follow Dayanand Bandodkar Marg along the Mandovi waterfront), is Panaji's nearest beach. The couple of kilometres of exposed sand facing Aguada Bay is hardly inspiring compared to other Goa beaches, but this is a popular place to watch the sun sink into the Arabian Sea, and it's an easy bicycle ride from the centre of Panaji.

While there is good swimming to be had at **Miramar Beach**, be warned that the experience might not be an altogether relaxing one. Not many foreigners venture down to Miramar Beach so you'll be something of an attraction – and in a less than modest bathing suit, an absolute spectacle.

Along the seafloor road, at the start of Miramar Beach, is **Gaspar Dias**. Originally a fort stood here, directly opposite the fort at Reis Magos. They were designed to defend the entrance to the Mandovi, although they were of limited use; in 1639 the Dutch attacked Goa and managed to destroy a number of ships before being driven off. There's no fort here now, but the most prominent position on the beachfront is taken up by a **statue** representing Hindu and Christian unity.

If the kids get bored of the beach you could take them to the **Goa Science Centre** (☎ 2463426; New Marine Hwy; admission Rs 10; ☎ 10.30am–6.30pm). Even though the centre only opened in December 2001, it is already looking tired. The science park in the centre grounds is a collection of play equipment that 'explain the laws of physics due to their intrinsic quality'. The centre focuses on interactive exhibits; kids can engage with the extensive oceanographic section and get more of an appreciation for the sea than just sun and sand. It's a few minutes' walk south along the New Marine Hwy from the Miramar roundabout.

There are many food stands lining the road if you continue from the roundabout towards Dona Paula. There is also a very well-placed Café Coffee Day. A reputable place for a seafood meal is **Martin's Beach Corner** (☎ 2464877; mains Rs 40–100; ☎ 11am–3pm & 6.30–11pm) at Caranzalem, near Bluet Bay Hotel. This is an unassuming spot but is well known to locals and the food is genuinely good. It also has a claim to fame – Roger Moore and Gregory Peck ate here during the filming of *The Sea Wolves*.

There are frequent buses to Miramar from Panaji (Rs 4, 20 minutes).

Dona Paula

☎ 0832

Continuing south past Miramar, the coast road leads to Dona Paula, a small peninsula with several resort complexes that have grown up around a fishing village. Although everyone agrees that the area is

named after Dona Paula de Menezes, the woman whose tombstone can be found in the chapel in the Cabo Raj Bhavan, there are numerous variations of the story about her. In one story she was the viceroy's heart-broken daughter who hurled herself from the nearby cliffs. Others have it that she was the virtuous wife of a nobleman, while still others claim that she was a lady-in-waiting to the viceroy's wife and also that she was the mistress of the viceroy himself. The only thing that seems certain is that she bequeathed the land on which the village is now built to the church.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

On the westernmost point of the peninsula stands an old fortress, **Cabo Raj Bhavan** (also known as Cabo Ray Niwas). Today the large estate on this headland is the residence of the governor of Goa. The double-storey structure is full of antique artefacts.

Plans to build a fort to guard the entrance to the Mandovi and Zuari Rivers were first proposed in 1540 and, although it was some years before work began, a chapel was raised on the spot almost immediately. The fort was subsequently completed and the chapel was extended by the Portuguese viceroy to include a Franciscan friary or convent. The fort, which was equipped with several cannons, was never actually used in anger, and from the 1650s the buildings were requisitioned as a temporary residence for the archbishop. In 1798 it was taken over by British troops, who remained in residence (apart from a brief break) until 1813.

On the southern side of the access road to the fort is the **British cemetery**, which is the last reminder of the British troops' presence. After their departure, the buildings were once again taken over by the archbishop of Goa as his private residence. They didn't remain long in his possession, however, for in 1866 the viceroy took a shine to the buildings, and had them refurbished and converted into the governor's palace.

You can drive up to the entrance gates (turn right at the roundabout if coming from Panaji), where there's a parking area and viewpoint with good views back across Miramar Beach, the Mandovi estuary and Fort Aguada. The chapel is open to the public for Sunday-morning service and at Christmas and Easter.

Continuing through the roundabout brings you to Dona Paula's small bay, where there are water sports and souvenir stalls. The **Dona Paula Sports Club** (☎ 2453278) – a fancy name for a shack on the beach – hires out jet skis; for Rs 70 you can jet-ski for a kilometre.

At the end of the road is a pier and small outcrop of rock, on which stands a **sculpture** designed by Baroness Yrsa von Leistner called 'Images of India'.

SLEEPING

Across from the harbour, on the peninsula facing the sea and the mouth of the Zuari River, are a couple of small resort hotels that are quite secluded and reasonably good value outside the high season.

Goan Delicacy (☎ 2453265; goandelicacy@yahoo.com; Hawaii Beach; r Rs 600–1000) If you're interested in staying in the 'real Goa', far from the mayhem of Dona Paula, then the obvious choice is Goan Delicacy, which has two spacious rooms (one upstairs, one down) both with a separate sitting room complete with satellite TV, a clean hot-water bathroom, a small kitchenette and a balcony where you can really make yourself at home. The rooms sleep up to four people. It's right across the road from a quiet patch of beach, from where you can pity the poor souls in the crowds across the way.

Zauri View (☎ 2456545; zuariview@yahoo.co.in; B3 Baywatch, Jetty Rd; d with bathroom Rs 1200) Opposite Hawaii Beach, Zauri View has four pleasant rooms overlooking the sea, and facilities such as hot water and satellite TV to keep you comfortable.

Cidade de Goa (☎ 2454545; www.cadadedegoa.com; d US\$200; 📺) Absolute indulgence is on offer at this opulent hotel 1km down the coast by Vaniguinim Beach. This is an exclusive world of opulence with all the usual five-star requirements including beachfront pool, health club and casino.

There are some miniresort-style accommodation options, both of which have a patch of beach and their own pool:

O Pescador (☎ 2453863; www.opescador.com; s/d with AC Rs 1200/2000, without AC Rs 1100/1400; 📺 📺) Space has been well used to create a nice view of the private beach. Full payment is required up front.

Prainha (☎ 2453881-3; www.prainha.com; d Rs 2000–2500; 📺 📺) Lovely, though slightly overpriced, beachside cottages and pleasant rooms in peaceful gardens.

EATING

Goan Delicacy (☎ 2453265; Hawaii Beach) A well-hidden gem down one of Dona Paula's most delightful roads, Goan Delicacy is a friendly, airy and immaculate place that cooks up delicious and imaginative fare such as lemon fish soup, steaks and ice cream. It's right next to the beach.

Nautica (vegetable thalis Rs 30; ☎ 8am-10pm) Nautica is a popular multitered restaurant with good views over the bay. It's also surprisingly well priced given its attempt at class; a vegetable thali is Rs 30, as is a beer. It's near Dona Paula Jetty.

Menino's Bar and Restaurant (☎ 2452702; mains Rs 30-100; breakfast, lunch & dinner) This low-key restaurant at the Jetty is a popular spot for Indian tourists, and serves Indian, Chinese and Goan dishes. The terrace is an ideal place to sit and admire the view.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Frequent buses to Miramar and Dona Paula leave from the Kadamba bus stand in Panaji (Rs 4, 20), and run along riverfront Dayanand Bandodkar Marg. There are several stops along this road.

Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary

Named after the late Dr Salim Moizzudin Abdul Ali, India's best-known ornithologist, this sanctuary on Chorao Island was proclaimed by the Forest Department in 1988 to protect the birdlife that thrives here and the mangroves that had grown around reclaimed marshland. Apart from the ubiquitous white egrets and purple herons, you can expect to see colourful kingfishers, eagles, cormorants, kites, woodpeckers, sandpipers, curlews, drongos and mynahs, to name a few. Marsh crocodiles and otters have also

been spotted by some visitors, along with the mudskipper fish that skim across the water's surface at low tide. There's a bird-watching tower in the sanctuary that can be reached by boat when the water level is not too low.

Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary is portrayed by cynics as having little to offer those who are not interested in birds. This is a great shame given that getting to the island is easy and a leisurely drift through its mangrove swamps offers a fascinating insight into life on this fragile terrain. Seeing the farming and fishing activities of the island is a fascinating contrast to nearby Panaji.

The best time to visit is either in the early morning (about 8am) or in the evening (a couple of hours before sunset), but since the Mandovi is a tidal river, boat trips depend somewhat on tide times. A trip to the sanctuary allows you to get waterborne and see Goa from a new perspective, and to that end the best way to cruise the waterways is in a dugout canoe with a local boatman, many of whom will be waiting on the mainland side of the ferry to the island. The going rate is anywhere between Rs 350 and Rs 500 for a 90-minute trip. Once you arrive on the island, you will have to pay the forest officer Rs 50 to enter the sanctuary.

A particularly good guide is **Paresh Sawant** (☎ 0832-2239141, 9822489611), a Chorao Island local and a bird-lover since his school days. Paresh will take you for a 1½-hour guided tour of the mangroves in a dugout canoe and excitedly point out the going-ons of the sanctuary, both human and animal. To find him, ask around at the ferry crossing or call him after 9pm to arrange a meeting time.

To get to Chorao Island, take a bus bound for Old Goa and ask to be let off at the Ribandar ferry crossing. Ferries go back and forth from 6.30am into the night, and are free for pedestrians (motorcycle/car Rs 4/20).

OLD GOA

☎ 0832

About 9km east of Panaji, a handful of imposing churches and convents remain in a city that was once so grand and so powerful it was said to rival Lisbon in magnificence. Known as the Rome of the East, Old Goa is without doubt Goa's premier historical attraction and you should put aside at least a morning or afternoon to explore it.

Old Goa was not only the capital of the new Portuguese colony but also the principal city of the Portuguese eastern empire. Its rise was meteoric: over the course of the hundred years following the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa, the city became famed throughout the world. One Dutch visitor compared it with Amsterdam for volume of trade and wealth. Its fall, however, was just as swift, and eventually the city was completely abandoned.

Today, although some of the churches are still in use (the tomb of St Francis Xavier is in the Basilica of Bom Jesus), many of the old buildings have become museums maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Old Goa can get very crowded on weekends and feast days. The best time to visit is weekday mornings, when you can take in mass at the Se Cathedral or Basilica Bom Jesus and explore the rest of the site before the afternoon heat sets in.

When visiting Old Goa do not come dressed in beach wear or sleeveless shirts. As a basilica, Bom Jesus is particularly sa-

cred to Christians. Indian tourists visiting the churches show much more respect than many Westerners – even (unnecessarily) leaving their shoes outside as they would at a Hindu temple.

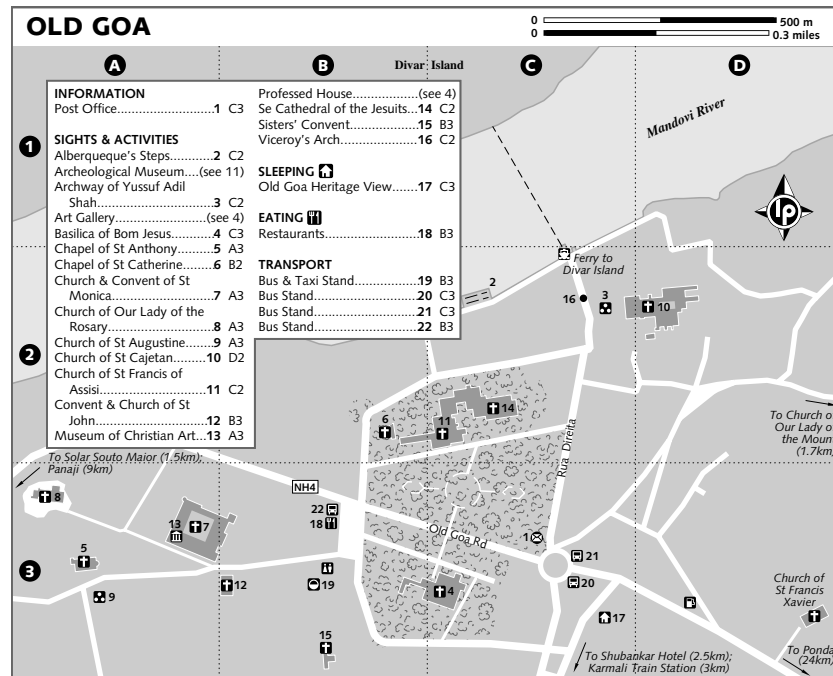
History

The first large-scale settlement in the area took place in the 15th century, when a port sprang up on the banks of the Mandovi near the tiny village of Ela. While the capital of the state was still officially to the south (at the site known today as Goa Velha), it had started to lose importance, both because of its vulnerability (it was sacked by Muslim invaders from the north in 1312 and 1470) and because the Zuari River, Goa Velha's port, had started to silt up. Shortly after the arrival of the Muslim Bahmani sultanate in 1470, the status of capital and the name Govepuri were transferred to the new site on the north of the main island, opposite Divar Island.

Within a short time the new capital was a thriving city. When the Bahmani sultanate disintegrated and Govepuri came into

DETOUR: CHORAO ISLAND

Chorao Island can be explored by bicycle or motorcycle, and you can also walk around the marshlands skirting the Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary (above). Although there's not much to see on the island, the village of **Chorao** has a number of Portuguese houses and is a typical Goan backwater where many locals are still pleasantly surprised to see you there – which is unexpected when you're so close to the capital.



the hands of the Muslim Bijapur sultanate, Gove was so favoured by Yussuf Adil Shah that it became his second capital. Contemporary accounts tell of the magnificence of the city and of the grandeur of the royal palace. In the years following his takeover, the city was enlarged and strengthened with ramparts and a moat. It became a major trading centre and a departure point for pilgrims to Mecca, and gained prominence for its shipbuilding.

In 1510, with the arrival of the Portuguese, Gove (which was known to the Portuguese as Goa) was the scene of not one but two takeovers. Afonso de Albuquerque managed to gain control of the entire island briefly in March, but was then evicted by Yussuf Adil Shah two months later. Having ridden out the monsoon in his ships, the indomitable Albuquerque attacked again in the autumn, and on 25 November (St Catherine's Day) recaptured Gove.

With Gove now firmly under control, the new rulers started to build. A major impetus was the arrival of the religious orders. Although the first missionaries arrived with Albuquerque as chaplains to his fleet, the real influx began in 1542 with the arrival of (among others) the young Francis Xavier.

In the following year the city experienced its first taste of the problems that were to lead to its eventual abandonment, when a cholera epidemic wiped out an estimated 200,000 inhabitants. Undeterred, the missionaries built churches, hospitals and seminaries, vying with each other to produce the most splendid buildings. All were modelled on European counterparts and consequently there are domes, pilasters, barrel arches and flying buttresses by the dozen.

By the late 16th century the city had expanded hugely; the city walls were removed and the moat filled in to allow for the spread. Goa at this time had an estimated population of around 250,000.

Ironically it was also at this time that Goa's fortunes began to turn. By the end of the 16th century, Portuguese supremacy on the seas had been usurped by the British, Dutch and French. The city's decline was accelerated by another devastating cholera epidemic, which struck in 1635. Bouts of disease recurred in the following years and eventually led to plans to abandon the city.

In 1684, against considerable opposition, the viceroy ordered work to begin on a new capital in Mormugao. His successor abandoned the project and then restarted work when ordered to do so by Lisbon, but the plan never really got off the ground.

In 1695, however, the viceroy himself decided to move to Panelim (then a village outside Old Goa). Although Old Goa remained the capital, everybody who could afford to do so followed his example to escape the appalling health problems. In this same year the population of the city was 20,000 – less than a 10th of what it had been a century before. By 1759, Panelim too had been struck by the same problems and the viceroy again moved his residence, this time to Panjim.

Despite Old Goa's virtual abandonment, in 1777 the government in Lisbon ordered the city be rebuilt, arguing that if the water supply and drainage could be thoroughly cleaned and reconstructed the city would be healthy. Work was abandoned five years later when the death toll among the workers from cholera and malaria became too high to continue.

The final blow came in 1835 when the Portuguese government ordered the repression of the religious societies and most of the missionaries were shipped home. By 1846 only the convent of Santa Monica was in regular use. When that was abandoned the ruins of the great city were left all but empty.

From the late 19th century until the mid-20th century the city remained empty, apart from one or two buildings used as military barracks. When archaeological interest started to increase, work was done to clear the area and some buildings were returned to their former uses. But for many of the buildings, which had been plundered for building materials or had simply fallen down, the reprieve came too late. The starkest reminder of this is the ruined tower of the Church of St Augustine, which can be seen from miles around.

Information

There's no tourist office but guides are available at the main churches. You can also inquire at the Archaeological Museum, which has books on Old Goa, including S Rajagopalan's excellent booklet *Old Goa*,

LUÍS VAZ DE CAMÕES

Luís Vaz de Camões (1524–80) is regarded as Portugal's greatest poet. The young man was banished to Goa in 1553 at the age of 29, after being accused of fighting with and wounding a magistrate in Lisbon. He was obviously no soft touch, for he enlisted in the army and fought with some distinction before attracting further official disapproval for publicly criticising the administration.

His reward this time was to be exiled to the Moluccas, and he returned to Goa only in 1562. Written at this time was his most famous work, *Os Lusíadas*, an epic poem glorifying the adventures of Vasco da Gama. Classical in style and imperialist in sentiment, the poem became an icon of Portuguese nationalism.

A statue of Camões, erected in 1960, stood in the centre of Old Goa until 1983, when many Goans decided that it was an unacceptable relic of colonialism. An attempt by radicals to blow it up met with only partial success, but the authorities took the hint and removed the statue. It now stands in the Archaeological Museum in Old Goa.

published by the Archaeological Survey of India. One of the most comprehensive books is *Old Goa the Complete Guide* by Oscar de Noronha (2004).

Sights

SE CATHEDRAL

At over 76m long and 55m wide, this is the largest church in Asia. The cathedral was begun in 1562, on the orders of King Dom Sebastiao of Portugal, to replace the older church of St Catherine, which had served as a cathedral up to this time. Progress was slow. Work on the building wasn't completed until 1619 and the altars weren't finished until 1652, some 90 years after the building's construction had first been ordered.

The cathedral stands on what was the main square of the city, and looking east from the main entrance it's possible to visualise something of the city's former layout. The grassy area in front of the doors was the large market square, to the left was the Senate House and to the right was the notorious Palace of the Inquisition.

The exterior of the cathedral is notable for its plain style, after the Tuscan tradition, and for the rather lopsided look that the loss of one bell tower, which collapsed in 1776, has given it. The remaining tower houses the famous **Golden Bell**, which is the largest bell in Asia and is renowned for its rich tone.

The huge interior of the cathedral is also plain. To the right as you enter is a small, locked area that contains a font that was made in 1532 and is said to have been used

by St Francis Xavier. The two small statues, which are inset into the main pillars, are of St Francis Xavier and St Ignatius Loyola. There are four chapels on either side of the nave, two of which have screens across the entrance. Of these, the **Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament** is quite outstanding, with every inch of wall and ceiling gilded and beautifully decorated – a complete contrast to the austerity of the cathedral interior.

Opposite, on the right of the nave, is the other screened chapel, the **Chapel of the Cross of Miracles**. The story goes that in 1619 a simple cross made by local shepherds was erected on a hillside near Old Goa. The cross grew bigger and several witnesses saw an apparition of Christ hanging on it. A church was planned on the spot where the vision had appeared and while this was being built the cross was stored nearby. When it came time to move the cross into the new church it was found that it had grown again and that the doors of the church had to be widened to accommodate it. The cross was moved to the cathedral in 1845.

Towering above the main altar is the huge gilded reredos (ornamental screen behind the altar in Goan churches). Its six main panels are carved with scenes from the life of St Catherine, to whom the cathedral is dedicated. She was beheaded in Alexandria, and among the images here are those showing her awaiting execution and being carried to Mt Sinai by angels.

Mass takes place from Monday to Saturday at 7am and 6pm; on Sunday it's at 7.15am, 10am (high mass) and 4pm.

THE INCORRUPT BODY OF ST FRANCIS XAVIER

Goa's patron saint, Francis Xavier, was born into a wealthy and aristocratic family in Navarre, Spain, on 7 April 1506. A brilliant scholar, he studied at Paris University, where he met Ignatius Loyola and thus came to the turning point in his life. Together with five others, they formed the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in 1534 and almost immediately hatched plans to travel to the Holy Land, where they hoped to convert the Muslims. Although the plans fell through, there was plenty to be done in other areas, and when missionaries were requested for the eastern empire, it seemed an ideal opportunity.

In April 1541, Xavier sailed from Portugal, arriving in Goa in May 1542. After a brief spell teaching, he commenced his travels, which took him to Ceylon, Malacca and Japan, among other places. In February 1552 he persuaded the viceroy to allow him to plan an embassy to China, a mission that his death cut short. He died on the island of Sancian, off the Chinese coast, on 2 December 1552.

After his death his servant is said to have emptied four sacks of quicklime into his coffin to consume his flesh in case the order came to return the remains to Goa. Two months later, the body was transferred to Malacca, where it was seen to be still in perfect condition – refusing to rot despite the quicklime. The following year, Francis Xavier's body was returned to Goa, where people declared its preservation to be a miracle.

The church was slower to acknowledge it, requiring a medical examination to establish that the body had not been embalmed. This was performed in 1556 by the viceroy's physician, who declared that all the internal organs were still intact and that no preservative agents had been used. He noticed a small wound in the chest and asked two Jesuits to put their fingers into it. He noted, 'When they withdrew them, they were covered with the blood which I smelt and found to be absolutely untainted.'

It was not until 1622 that canonisation took place. By then, holy relic hunters decided to corrupt the incorrupt body. In 1614 the right arm was removed and divided between Jesuits in Japan and Rome, and by 1636 parts of one shoulder blade and all the internal organs had been scattered through Southeast Asia. By the end of the 17th century the body was in an advanced state of desiccation and the miracle appeared to be over. The Jesuits decided to enclose the corpse in a glass coffin out of view, and it was not until the mid-19th century that the current cycle of expositions began.

Every 10 years, the glass coffin containing the body is brought out so the masses can see the 450-year-old remains. The exposition takes place around Xavier's feast day – 3 December – with the next event taking place in 2014.

CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

West of Se Cathedral, the Church of St Francis of Assisi is one of the most interesting buildings in Old Goa. A small chapel was built on this site by eight Franciscan friars on their arrival in 1517. In 1521 it was replaced by a church consecrated to the Holy Ghost. This church was subsequently rebuilt in 1661, and only the doorway of the old building was incorporated into the new structure. This original doorway, in ornate Manueline style, contrasts strongly with the rest of the façade, the plainness of which had by that time become the fashion.

The interior of the church is particularly beautiful – perhaps because the local artisans were given greater freedom with their skills here than elsewhere. The walls and ceiling

are heavily gilded and covered with carved wood panels, and there are a number of large paintings on the walls of the chancel. A huge arch that supports the choir, painted vividly with floral designs, and the intricately carved pulpit are worth looking out for. The reredos again dominates, although it is different from others in Old Goa, with a deep recess for the tabernacle. The four statues in the lower part of the reredos are of the apostles, and above the reredos is Christ on the cross. The symbolism of this scene is unmistakable: Jesus has his right arm free to embrace St Francis, who is standing on the three vows of the Franciscan order – poverty, humility and obedience.

Like many other churches in Old Goa, this church has the tombstones of many of

the Portuguese gentry laid into the floor. The font, situated just beside the door, is made partly from a fragment of an old pillar from a Hindu temple.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The convent at the back of the Church of St Francis of Assisi is now the **Archaeological Museum** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Sat-Thu). It houses fragments of sculpture from Hindu temple sites in Goa, which show Chalukyan and Hoysala influences, and stone Vetal images from the animist cult that flourished in this part of India centuries ago. Also here are two large bronze statues: one of the Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões (p103), which once stood in the area between the Se Cathedral and the Basilica of Bom Jesus, and one of Afonso de Albuquerque, the first governor, which stood at Miramar.

Upstairs, a gallery contains portraits of the Portuguese viceroys. These paintings were housed in random locations around the state until they were finally collected and displayed here.

CHAPEL OF ST CATHERINE

About 100m to the west of the Church of St Francis stands the Chapel of St Catherine. An earlier chapel was erected on this site by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1510 to commemorate his entry into the city on St Catherine's Day. In 1534 the chapel was granted cathedral status by Pope Paul III and in 1550 it was rebuilt. The inscribed stone that was added during the rebuilding states that Afonso de Albuquerque actually entered the city at this spot, and hence it is believed that the chapel is built on what used to be the main gate of the Muslim city. The Chapel of St Catherine was rebuilt in laterite in 1952. The chapel remains empty and is rarely open to visitors.

BASILICA OF BOM JESUS

This basilica is famous throughout the Roman Catholic world. It contains the tomb and mortal remains of St Francis Xavier, the so-called Apostle of the Indies (opposite). A former pupil of St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), St Francis Xavier's missionary voyages became legendary – considering the state of transport at the time, they were nothing short of miraculous.

This is the only church in Old Goa that is not plastered on the outside, the lime plaster having been stripped off by a zealous Portuguese conservationist in 1950. Apparently the idea was that, exposed to the elements, the laterite would become more durable and thus the building would be strengthened. Despite proof to the contrary, no-one has got around to putting the plaster back yet.

Construction began in 1594 and the church was completed in 1605. The façade has elements of Doric, Ionic and Corinthian design, and the pillars and detail are carved from basalt that was brought from Bassein, some 300km away. Prominent in the design of the façade is the Jesuit emblem 'IHS', which is the abbreviation of the words for 'Jesus' in Greek.

Inside the basilica the layout is simple but grand. The original vaulted ceiling has now been replaced by a simple wooden one. To the left of the door as you enter the basilica is a statue of St Francis Xavier, but yet again the huge and ornate gilded reredos that stretches from floor to ceiling behind the altar takes pride of place. The baroque detail of the ornament contrasts strongly with the classical, plain layout of the cathedral itself. As in the Church of St Francis of Assisi, the symbolism of the figures depicted is important. The reredos shows St Ignatius Loyola protecting a tiny figure of the Christ child. St Ignatius' eyes are raised to a huge gilded sun above his head, on which IHS is emblazoned. Above the sun is a depiction of the Trinity.

To the right of the altar, however, is the highlight for the vast majority of visitors, for it is here that the body of St Francis Xavier is kept. The body was moved into the church in 1622, and in the late 1680s the duke of Tuscany financed the building of the marble catafalque. In exchange for his contribution he was given the pillow on which St Francis' head had been resting. The duke engaged the Florentine sculptor Giovanni Batista Foggini and finally, after 10 years' work, the three-tiered structure was erected in the basilica in 1698. The catafalque is constructed of jasper and marble. On each side of the second tier are bronze plaques that depict scenes from the saint's life. Atop the structure is the casket, which was designed by Italian Jesuit

Marcelo Mastrili and constructed by local silversmiths in 1637.

Passing from the chapel towards the sacristy there are a couple of items relating to St Francis' remains and, slightly further on, the stairs to a gallery. Even if the paintings are not to your taste, a visit to the gallery is still worthwhile, as there's a small window that looks down on the tomb of St Francis Xavier, allowing you a different perspective.

Next to the basilica is the **Professed House of the Jesuits**, a two-storey laterite building covered with lime plaster. It actually predates the basilica, having been completed in 1585. It was from here that Jesuit missions to the east were organised. Part of the building burned down in 1633 and was partially rebuilt in 1783.

Mass is held in the basilica at 7am and 8am Monday to Saturday, and at 8am and 9.15am on Sunday.

CHURCH OF ST CAJETAN

Modelled on the original design of St Peter's in Rome, this church was built by Italian friars of the Order of Theatines, who were sent by Pope Urban VIII to preach Christianity in the kingdom of Golconda (near Hyderabad). The friars were not permitted to work in Golconda, so they settled at Old Goa in 1640. The construction of the church began in 1655, and although it's perhaps less interesting than the other churches, it's still a beautiful building and the only truly domed church remaining in Goa. The altar is dedicated to Our Lady of Divine Providence, but the church is more popularly named after the founder of the Theatine order, St Cajetan (1480–1547), a contemporary of St Francis Xavier. Born in Vicenza, St Cajetan spent all of his life in Italy, establishing the Order of Theatines in Rome in 1524. He was known for his work in hospitals and with 'incurables', and for his high moral stance in an increasingly corrupt Roman Catholic church. He was canonised in 1671.

The façade of the church is classical in design and the four niches on the front contain statues of apostles. Inside, clever use of internal buttresses and four huge pillars have turned the interior into a cruciform, above the centre of which is the towering dome. The inscription around the inside of the base of the dome is a verse from St Matthew's Gospel. The largest of the altars

on the right side of the church is dedicated to St Cajetan himself. On the left side are paintings illustrating episodes in the life of St Cajetan; in one it appears that he is being breast-fed at some distance by an angel whose aim is remarkably accurate.

RUINS OF THE CHURCH OF ST AUGUSTINE

All that is really left of this church is the 46m-high tower, which served as a belfry and formed part of the façade of the church. The few other remnants are choked with creepers and weeds, and access is difficult.

The church was constructed in 1602 by Augustinian friars who arrived at Old Goa in 1587. It was abandoned in 1835 because of the repressive policies of the Portuguese government, which resulted in the eviction of many religious orders from Goa. The church fell into neglect and the vault collapsed in 1842. In 1931 the façade and half the tower fell down, followed by more sections in 1938. The tower's huge bell was moved in 1871 to the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Panjim, where it can be seen (and heard) today.

CHURCH & CONVENT OF ST MONICA

Work on this three-storey laterite building commenced in 1606 and was completed in 1627, only to burn down nine years later. Reconstruction started the following year and it's from this time that the buildings date. Once known as the Royal Monastery because of the royal patronage that it enjoyed, the building was the first nunnery in the east. Like the other religious institutions, it was crippled by the banning of the religious orders, but did not immediately close, although it was forbidden to recruit any further. It was finally abandoned when the last sister died in 1885. During the 1950s and '60s the buildings housed first Portuguese and then Indian troops, before being returned to the church in 1968.

The building is now used by the Mater Dei Institute as a theological centre. Visitors are allowed in if they are reasonably dressed. There are fading murals on the inside of the western walls of the chapel.

MUSEUM OF CHRISTIAN ART

Adjacent to the Convent of St Monica, this **museum** (adult/child Rs 15/free; ☎ 9.30am–5pm) contains a collection of statuary, paintings and

sculptures, most of it transferred here from the Rachol Seminary. Many of the works of Goan Christian art made during the Portuguese era, including some of those on display here, were produced by local Hindu artists. Among the items on show are richly embroidered priest vestments, a number of devotional paintings and carvings, and a fair amount of silverware, including crucifixes, salvers and crowns.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

Passing beneath the flying buttresses of the Convent of St Monica, about 250m further along the road is the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, which stands on the top of a high bluff. It is one of the earliest churches in Goa – the legend has it that Albuquerque surveyed the attack on the Muslim city from the bluff and vowed to build a church there in thanks for his victory.

The church, which has been beautifully restored, is Manuline in style, and refreshingly simple in design. There are excellent views of the Mandovi River and Divar Island from the church's dramatic position, but unfortunately the building is frequently locked.

The only ornaments on the outside of the church are simple rope-twist devices, which bear testimony to Portugal's reliance on the sea. Inside the same is true; the reared is wonderfully plain after all the gold of those in the churches below, and the roof consists simply of a layer of tiles. Set into the floor in front of the altar is the tombstone of one of the governors, Garcia de Sa, and set into the northern wall of the chancel is that of his wife, Caterina a Piro, who was the first Portuguese woman to arrive in Goa. According to legend they were married by St Francis Xavier as she lay dying.

CHAPEL OF ST ANTHONY

Opposite the ruins of the Church of St Augustine is the Chapel of St Anthony, which is now in use as part of a convent. The chapel, dedicated to the saint of the Portuguese army and navy, was one of the earliest to be built in Goa, again on the directions of Albuquerque in order to celebrate the assault on the city. Like the other institutions around it, St Anthony's was abandoned in 1835 but was brought back into use at the end of the 19th century.

VICEROY'S ARCH

Perhaps the best way to arrive in Old Goa is in the same way that visitors did in the city's heyday. Approaching along the river (and probably giving thanks for having made it at all), the visitors would have first glimpsed the busy wharf just in front of the entrance to the city. Although the city's fortifications were demolished to make way for new buildings, on the road up from the dock there was nonetheless an archway to symbolise entry.

This archway, called the Viceroy's Arch, was erected by Vasco da Gama's grandson, who became viceroy in 1597. On the side facing the river, the arch (which was restored in 1954 after collapsing) is ornamented with the deer emblem of Vasco da Gama's coat of arms. Above it in the centre of the archway is a statue of da Gama himself. On the side facing the city is a sculpture of a European woman wielding a sword over an Indian, who is lying under her feet. No prizes for guessing what the message is here. The arch originally had a third storey with a statue of St Catherine.

If you take a moment here, it's possible to imagine something of the layout of the old city. Looking towards the ferry dock, the main docks at which the newly arrived ships were unloaded were to the left. The arsenal and mint were here too, although they were dismantled for building materials after the city was abandoned. To the right, the quay led into one of the busiest market areas in the city. If you face the Viceroy's Arch, just to the left was the Muslim ruler Yussuf Adil Shah's palace, which was eventually taken over as the viceroy's residence. All that remains of the palace now is the **gateway**, which can be seen on the left as you approach the entrance to the Church of St Cajetan. The road running from the dock through the Viceroy's Arch and into the city was known as the Rua Direita, and was lined with shops and businesses.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE MOUNT

There is one other church in Old Goa, which often gets overlooked as it is some 2km east of the central area. Approached by a long and overgrown flight of steps, the hill on which the church stands commands an excellent view of the whole of Old Goa below. This is reputedly where Yussuf

Adil Shah placed his artillery during the assault to recapture the city in May 1510, and again when he was defending the city in November. The church was built shortly after, completed in 1519, and has been rebuilt twice since.

Festivals & Events

Procession of All Saints On the fifth Monday of Lent, this is the only procession of its sort outside Rome. Thirty statues of saints are brought out from storage and paraded around Old Goa's neighbouring villages.

Feast of St Francis Xavier Held on 3 December and preceded by a nine-day novena, this is the biggest festival of the year. There are lots of festivities and huge crowds here over this period, especially for the exposition of St Francis Xavier's body, held once every 10 years – the next expo is in 2014.

Sleeping

There are only a couple of hotels in the vicinity of Old Goa – not that there's much reason to stay there given its proximity to Panaji.

Old Goa Heritage View (Old Goa Residency; ☎ 228 5327, 2285013; d with/without AC Rs 600/440; 🏠) The GTDC's offering has reasonably good-value rooms and is a comfortable distance from everything you're in Old Goa to see.

Shubhankar Hotel (☎ 2284619, 2285920; Karmali; s/d with bathroom Rs 300/500, without bathroom Rs 100/200, with AC Rs 400/600; 🏠) The cheapest option is Shubhankar Hotel, which has clean (sterile) rooms that are good value. This hotel mainly caters to people using the Karmali train station, which is immediately around the corner.

Eating

Solar Souto Maior (☎ 5614524; www.solargoa.in) For a culinary and historical experience, come to this restored part of a Portuguese palace that has been converted into a café and a series of shops and gallery rooms. The building itself is 420 years old, but has only recently been restored with enormous taste and care. Solar Souto Maior also hosts cultural events and art exhibitions. It's only 1.5km from Old Goa in the district of St Pedro – taxi drivers will know where it is.

Tourist Inn (curries around Rs 80) Although there are a few basic restaurants scattered around the sites of Old Goa, at Tourist Inn you can enjoy a cold beer and the view over St Xavier's. Its menu does warn of a 15-

minute wait but it's well located for a pit stop between sites.

There are random street stalls scattered throughout the area that sell drinks and snacks.

Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to Old Goa (Rs 4, 25 minutes) from the Kadamba bus stand at Panaji; buses from Panaji to Ponda also pass through Old Goa. Buses to Panaji or Ponda leave when full (around every 10 minutes) from either the main roundabout or the bus stand in front of the Basilica Bom Jesus. Alternatively, Old Goa makes a nice bicycle or motorcycle excursion.

DIVAR ISLAND

The small island of Divar, which lies to the southeast of Chorao Island and to the north of Old Goa, is not only a useful short cut on the route from Panaji to Bicholim taluka (district), but is also worth a visit in its own right. Somehow Divar Island, separated from the rest of the state by the forked waters of the Mandovi, seems even quieter and more picturesque than the villages on the mainland. The largest settlement on the island, **Piedade**, is sleepy but picturesque; it's well maintained but also has hints of crumbling Portuguese architecture.

Divar Island was sacred to the Hindus and it contained two particularly important temples – the Saptakoteshwara Temple (which was moved across the river to Bicholim when the Portuguese began to persecute the Hindus), as well as a Ganesh temple that stood on the solitary hill in Piedade. It's likely that the Ganesh temple was destroyed by Muslim troops near the end of the 15th century, since the first church on this site was built in around 1515.

The church that occupies the hill today, the **Church of Our Lady of Compassion**, is in fine condition. It combines an impressive façade with an engagingly simple interior. The ceiling is picked out in plain white stucco designs, and the windows are set well back into the walls, allowing only a dim light to penetrate into the church.

From the small park near the church there are excellent views to the north, west and south. Across the river to the south, the whitewashed towers of the churches of Old Goa are clearly visible.

Divar Island can only be reached by ferry. A boat from Old Goa (near the Vice-roy's Arch) runs to the south of the island, and the east end of the island is connected by ferry to Naroa in Bicholim taluka. A less frequent ferry operates to Ribandar from the southwest of the island.

Divar makes a good outing by bicycle, especially combined with a trip to Old Goa. Most of the island is flat, but it's a tough slog getting up the hill to the church. Although buses run between the ferry and Piedade, it would be a frustrating exercise trying to get around here by public transport – even taxis are scant.

At the time of research, **Deevaya A Resort** (☎ 0832-5641936), a huge five-star resort, was in the process of being built on Divar Island, at the rather unlikely northern end of the road. To find it, keep on driving straight through the intersection when you get off the ferry. When the road peters out and you feel as though you're lost, keep going and the resort will appear before you like a mirage.

GOA VELHA

☎ 0832

Before the establishment of Old Goa as the Muslim capital, the major port and capital city under the Kadambas had been on the south side of Tiswadi Island, on the banks of the Zuari River. The Kadambas knew this city as Govepuri, but the Portuguese, distinguishing between the new capital, Goa, and the old site, called it Goa Velha.

In its heyday, Govepuri was an international port, attracting Arab traders who began to settle in the area. In 1312 the city was almost totally destroyed by Muslim invaders from the north, and over the following years repeated invasions by the Muslims caused havoc. It wasn't until Goa was taken into the Vijayanagar empire in 1378 that trade revived, but by this time the fortunes of the old capital had begun to decline anyway, due to both the crushing blow of its destruction and the fact that the waters on which it based its livelihood were silting up.

In 1470 the Muslim Bahmani sultanate took Goa, destroyed what was left of the old city, and moved the capital to the new site in the north, which they also called Govepuri but which is now known as Old Goa.

Little remains of Goa Velha, the site of which lies 3km north of the small village of Agassaim, on the northern side of the Zuari bridge. There are, however, some interesting sights nearby, and since the Panaji–Margao road runs straight through the centre of this area, the sites are easily accessible.

However, this whole area is a good place to come for a leisurely day out on a motor-cycle. The countryside is lovely and, among other things, you can see the traditional methods of salt collection, which are practised in saltpans all around here. The salt-pans are man-made rectangular 'fields' in which water is caught and channelled. As the water evaporates, a crystallisation process occurs and the salt is harvested.

Sights

CHURCH OF ST ANDREW

Just off the main road at the northern extent of Goa Velha is the Church of St Andrew, which hosts an annual festival. On the Monday a fortnight before Easter, 30 statues of saints are taken from their storage place and paraded around the roads of the village. The festivities include a small fair, and the crowds that attend this festival are so big, the police have to restrict movement on the national highway that runs past the village.

The procession has its origins in the 17th century when, at the prompting of the Franciscans, a number of life-size statues were paraded as a reminder to the local people of the lives of the saints. Originally the processions started and ended at Pilar, but in 1834 the religious orders were forced to leave Goa and the statues were transferred to the Church of St Andrew. Processions lapsed and many of the original sculptures were lost or broken, but in 1895 subscriptions were raised to obtain a new set.

CHURCH OF ST ANNE

About 5km north of Goa Velha, the Church of St Anne (known to the local people simply as Santana) is one place that has really suffered from neglect over the past few years. A hand-painted sign by the side door still boasts the claim made by some observers that this is one of the greatest churches of its type (baroque with Indian influences). However, it's now hard to feel anything other than sorry for the appalling state it's in now. Even so, blackened as it is, with vegetation

growing out of the façade and broken shutters hanging down, the place is still undeniably impressive. The massive front of the chapel is set off by the large cross before the building, and if you peep through the doors you can see that the interior is still intact. The whole thing has a rather ghostly air about it.

PILAR SEMINARY

North of Agassaim, set on a hill high above the surrounding countryside, is the Pilar Seminary, one of four seminaries built by the Portuguese; only two of the seminaries still survive, the other being Rachol Seminary, near Margao. The hill on which the seminary stands was once the site of a large Hindu temple that overlooked Goa Velha. The original church on the site was built in 1613 by Capuchin monks. They established a centre of learning there and named the seminary Our Lady of Pilar, after the statue they had brought from Spain.

Abandoned in 1835, the seminary was rescued by the Carmelites in 1858 and became the headquarters of the Missionary Society of St Francis Xavier in 1890. The movement gradually petered out and in 1936 the buildings were handed over to the Xaverian League. Today the seminary is still in use, and is also the site of local pilgrimages by those who come to give thanks for the life of Father Agnelo de Souza, a director of the seminary in the early 20th century who was beatified after his death.

The old Church of Our Lady of Pilar has an original statue brought from Spain and

also some attractive paintings in an alcove at the rear of the chapel. Just up the hill, in the seminary itself, there is a small museum containing some religious paintings and carvings, and some of the relics of the Hindu temples that were on or near this site.

CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE

About 3km south of Goa Velha, at the south end of Agassaim, is the Church of St Lawrence, a plain and battered-looking building that houses one of the most flamboyantly decorated reredos in Goa. The heavily gilded construction behind the altar is unique not only for its wealth of detail but also for its peculiar design, which has multitudes of candlesticks projecting from the reredos itself. The panelled blue-and-white ceiling of the chancel sets the scene. Also interesting are the Jesuit IHS symbols set into the tiled walls.

Getting There & Away

All buses running between Panaji and Margao pass through Goa Velha and Agassaim. Buses will drop you at the entrance to the Pilar Seminary. To reach the Church of St Anne you really need your own transport.

PONDA & AROUND

☎ 0832

Ponda taluka is something of a Hindu heartland; the dense terrain of the hills hides Goa's most renowned temples, which have distinct architectural styles and histories, as well as Goa's oldest remaining mosque, Safa Shahouri Masjid (Safa Masjid).

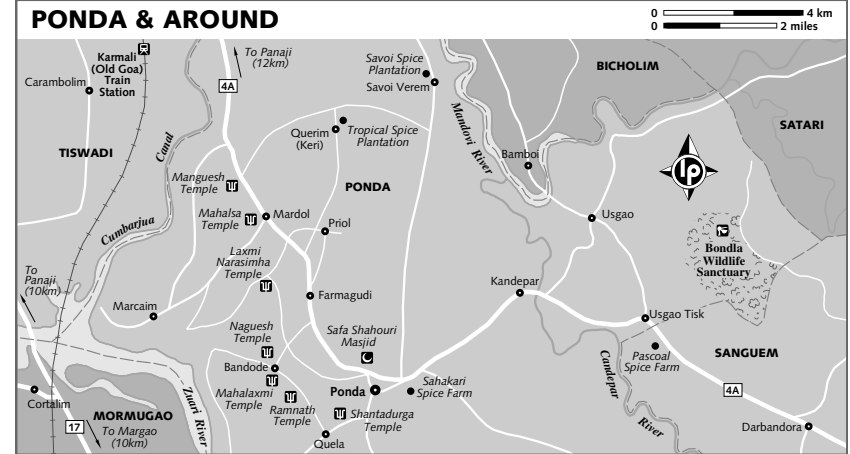
ABBÉ FARIA

A pioneer in the field of hypnosis and a favourite son of Goa, Jose Custodia Faria studied under Franz Anton Mesmer – the famous hypnotist whose name led to the word 'mesmerise' – and was the first to assert that the subject's will and expectations were crucial to the success of the hypnosis.

Faria was born in Candolim, Goa, in 1756. His father was Portuguese and his mother Indian. When he was eight years old they were seized with religious fervour and separated; his mother became a nun and his father a monk. He was sent from Goa to Lisbon to study for the church, was ordained in Rome and then moved to Paris, where he was involved in the French Revolution.

In Paris his interest in hypnosis developed under Mesmer. He began to practise as a hypnotic medium, but his séances, though they attracted a considerable following, were roundly condemned by the church and he was publicly denounced. Just before he died in 1819, Faria published a seminal text on hypnosis, *On the Cause of Lucid Sleep*.

Alexander Dumas was so intrigued by the story of Abbé Faria's life and work that he based the mad monk in *The Count of Monte Cristo* on him.



For nearly 250 years after the arrival of the Portuguese, Ponda remained under the control of Muslim or Hindu rulers, and many of the temples came to exist when Hindus were forced to escape from Portuguese persecution by fleeing across the waterway that marked the border of Ponda. Upon reaching safety, they built temples in which to securely install the deities they took with them. There the temples remained, safe from the destruction that occurred in the Velhas Conquistas (Old Conquests). By the time that Ponda itself came under Portuguese control, increased religious tolerance meant that no threat was posed to the temples.

Despite the temples' history, true temple junkies may be disappointed with Ponda's collection. Because most had to be built from scratch, or at least rebuilt since the arrival of the Portuguese, these are modern in appearance compared to India's other temples. But don't let unfair comparisons detract from the contrast of an inland trip away from the famous coastline.

The other reason to visit Ponda taluka is to visit one of the spice plantations that wait on the other side of a winding drive, welcoming you with lavish lunches and tours of their grounds (p114).

The capital of Ponda taluka is the town of Ponda. Given its central location in Goa, several large companies established themselves here as an effective base from which to distribute their goods. It didn't take long

for commerce to colonise the town, so that now its centre feels like an overcrowded slice of city – a stark contrast to the relative peace and quiet of its surrounds.

Sights

MANGUESH TEMPLE

This temple admirably demonstrates two features of Goan Hinduism – it is dedicated to a deity recognised only in Goa, Manguesh, and it exhibits a mix of architectural styles.

Manguesh was an incarnation of Shiva. Legend has it that Shiva, having lost everything to his wife Parvati in a game of dice, came to Goa in a self-imposed exile. When Parvati eventually came looking for him, he decided to frighten her and disguised himself as a tiger. In horror, Parvati cried out '*trahi mam girisha*' (O lord of mountains save me), whereupon Shiva turned back into his normal form. The words *mam girisha* became associated with the tale and thus the form in which he appeared at the time came to be known as Manguesh. A lingam (phallic symbol of Shiva) left to mark the spot where all this had occurred was eventually discovered by a shepherd, and a temple was built to house it.

Originally the temple was based on the south side of the Zuari River, near the place where the village of Cortalim stands today. When the Portuguese took control, however, the lingam was brought to Priol and installed in a new temple. The grounds were

enlarged in the mid-18th century and today there is a substantial complex that includes accommodation for pilgrims and the temple administrative offices.

Architecturally, the temple is distinctly Goan; it shows the influences of both Christian and Muslim styles. Evidence of Christian influence is in the octagonal tower above the sanctum, the pillared façade of the seven-storey *deepastambha* (lamp tower) and the balustrade design around the roof. The domed roofs indicate the Muslim influence. The tank (reservoir) in front of the temple is the oldest part of the complex. If you walk down to the right side of the temple, you can also see the chariots that are used to parade the deities during the temple's festival, which takes place in the last week of January or the first week of February.

MAHALSA TEMPLE

The Mahalsa Temple, 1km down the road from the Manguesh Temple, is in the tiny village of Mardol. This temple's deity originally resided in an ancient shrine in the village of Verna in Salcete taluka. The buildings were reputedly so beautiful that even the Portuguese priest whose job it was to oversee their destruction requested that they should be preserved and converted into a church. Permission was refused, but before the work began in 1543 the deity was smuggled away to safety.

Again, Mahalsa is a uniquely Goan incarnation, this time of Vishnu in a female form. Various legends suggest how Mahalsa came into being. In one, Vishnu, who was in a particularly tight corner during a struggle with the forces of evil, disguised himself as Mohini, the most beautiful woman ever seen, in order to distract his enemies. The trick worked and Mohini, with her name corrupted to Mahalsa, was born. To complicate matters, Mahalsa also fits into the pantheon as an incarnation of Shiva. In general, however, she is regarded by her devotees as a representative of peace; for this, and for her multifaceted identity, she has many devotees.

Once you pass through the entrance gate and out of the busy side street, the temple is pleasantly peaceful. The inner area is impressive, with huge wooden pillars and slatted windows, and like the other temples in this area, an ornamented silver frame sur-

rounds the doorway to the sanctum. Walk around to the back of the main building and peer through the archway to the water tank; the combination of the ancient stonework, palm trees and paddy fields beyond is quite a sight.

In front of the temple stands a large *deepastambha* and a 12.5m-high brass oil lamp that is lit during festivals; it is thought to be the largest such lamp in the world.

In addition to the annual chariot procession held in February for the **Zatra festival**, the temple is also famous for two other festivals. Jasmine flowers are offered in tribute to the god Mahalsa during the **Zaiyanchi Puja festival** in August or September. The full-moon festival of **Kojagiri Purnima** is also celebrated here; the goddess Lakshmi (Laxmi) descends on the earth on this particular night (usually in September) to bestow wealth and prosperity on those who stayed awake to observe the night vigil.

LAXMI NARASIMHA TEMPLE

Almost immediately after leaving the village of Mardol on the main road, a side road to the right takes you up a hill towards the Laxmi Narasimha Temple. This is one of the most attractive temples around Ponda. It's dedicated to an incarnation of Vishnu, half lion and half man, that he created to defeat a formidable adversary. The deity was moved here from the area of the Old Conquests in the mid-16th century. The best part of the temple is the ancient-looking water tank, which is to the left of the compound as you enter. Although the temple has a sign by the door announcing that entry is for the 'devoted and believers only', nonbelievers will probably be allowed to have a look. Otherwise you get the best overall view of the place from the gateway to the tank, looking through the *mandapa* (pillared pavilion) to the inner area and the sanctum beyond.

NAGUESH TEMPLE

A short distance further south, in the village of Bandode, is the small and peaceful Naguesh Temple. The most striking part of the temple is the ancient water tank, where the overhanging palms and the weathered stone make an attractive scene. Also of note are colourful images in relief around the base of the *deepastambha*. Unlike its

neighbours, this temple was in existence well before Albuquerque ever set foot in Goa, but the buildings you see today are newish and rather uninteresting. The temple is dedicated to Shiva.

MAHALAXMI TEMPLE

Only 4km outside Ponda, and a stone's throw from the Naguesh Temple, is the relatively uninspiring Mahalaxmi Temple. The goddess Mahalaxmi, looked upon as the mother of the world, was particularly worshipped by the Shilahara rulers and by the Kadambas, and thus has featured prominently in the Hindu pantheon in southern India. Here she wears a lingam on her head, symbolising her connection with Shiva.

RAMNATH TEMPLE

This temple is notable mainly for the impressive silver frame of the door to the sanctum. Although other temples have similar finery, the work here is exceptional, particularly the two unusual scenes depicted at the top of the lintel. The lower of the two depicts kneeling figures worshipping a lingam, while the upper one shows Vishnu lying with Lakshmi, his consort, on a couch made up of the coils of a snake. The lingam installed in the sanctum was brought from Loutolim in Salcete taluka.

SHANTADURGA TEMPLE

The Shantadurga Temple is one of the most famous shrines in Goa. Consequently, it is not only packed with those who come to worship, but also with tourists brought here by the bus load.

The goddess Shantadurga is another form taken by Parvati, Shiva's consort. As the most powerful of the goddesses, Parvati could either adopt a violent form, Durga, or she could help to bring peace, as Shanta. The legend goes that during a particularly savage quarrel between Shiva and Vishnu she appeared in her Durga form and helped to make peace between the two gods – thus embodying the contradiction that the name Shantadurga implies. In Goa, she has come to be worshipped as the goddess of peace and has traditionally had a large following.

The temple, which was built in 1738 during the reign of Shahu Raja of Satara, stands on a hillside facing the road from Ponda and makes an impressive sight.

SAFA SHAHOURI MASJID

The oldest mosque remaining in Goa, the Safa Shahouri Masjid, is right by the NH4A on the outskirts of Ponda. Built by Ali Adil Shah in 1560, it was originally surrounded by gardens and fountains, and matched the mosques at Bijapur in size and quality. The buildings were damaged and then left to decay when the Portuguese moved into the area. Today little remains of its former grandeur, although the Archaeological Survey of India has undertaken limited restoration.

The mosque, a tiny white building set on a stone platform well back from the road, is usually kept locked. In front of it is an ancient water tank, constructed of laterite; unusually, the tank is on the south side of the building, rather than to the east in front of the entrance. Apart from the tiny mosque and the dilapidated tank, there are only a few broken pillars and random blocks of stone to mark the extent of the old buildings.

Sleeping & Eating

Given that Ponda is a mere 30 km from Panaji and has little to offer other than a few decent restaurants and logistical convenience to the sights of interest, few travellers opt to stay overnight.

Farmagudi Hill Retreat (☎ 2335122, 2335037; dm Rs 100, r with/without AC Rs 650/500, r deluxe Rs 1050; 🚻) Farmagudi is Ponda's GTDC residency and is by far the best place to stay in Ponda. Rooms are cottage style and quite private, which makes a nice change from the concrete blocks that comprise most GTDC establishments. There are 39 rooms and some dorm beds, though solo female travellers are unlikely to be allowed to use one. There is also an Indian-and-Chinese restaurant on site.

Hotel Prakash Heritage (☎ 2317794, 2317796; Super Market Complex; d with/without AC Rs 500/450, ste Rs 900; 🚻) This decent option is more centrally located in the busy heart of Ponda. Rooms are plain but reasonably sized and have hot water. If you want more space, ask for a special rate on the suite.

Café Bhonee (☎ 2318725; thalis around Rs 30) This all-vegetarian restaurant is a highlight of Ponda and takes a lot of pride in the way it looks and the food it serves. The environment is clean and warm, and there is something in the air that says the local families

look forward to coming here. It's just across the road from Hotel Prakash Heritage.

Sumudra Pub (☎ 2316779; 🕒 11am-3pm & 7-11pm) This is another place that refreshingly doesn't have tourists in mind. It has a spacious and airy eating area above the street, and boasts seafood specials plus a prawn curry (around Rs 50).

Getting There & Away

Buses to Ponda (Rs 15) leave from the Kadamba station in Panaji. There are three major places to get off the bus when arriving in Ponda. The first (and probably easiest) is the roundabout just outside the Farmagudi Hill Retreat. The others are the Kadamba bus station, which is impractical given that it's either an uphill walk or an autorickshaw ride to town, and the busier bus stop in the middle of town.

BONDLA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The drive out to the **Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary** (adult/child Rs 5/2, motorcycle/car Rs 10/50, camera/video camera Rs 25/100; 🕒 9am-5pm, Fri-Wed) is a pleasant one; the roads wind through villages, lush vegetation and rice fields – a dense, green contrast to the terrain closer to the coast.

You're unlikely to see animals just by wandering around the sanctuary, and in-

deed it can even be difficult finding them in the zoo, which is 1.5km into the park and was established to ensure that animal enthusiasts don't leave the park too disappointed. Entry to the zoo is included in your entrance fee into the sanctuary. There are various animals in enclosures here, and you can even have a ride on an elephant (Rs 80). The presence of numerous signs warning people not to tease, touch or throw stones at the animals is a happy addition. This place isn't as bad as many subcontinental zoos, and the animals seem fairly content to laze around. It's a pleasant sort of spot to walk around for half an hour.

There is pleasant **chalet accommodation** (☎ 0832-2229701; dm/s/d Rs 75/250/350) at the entrance to the sanctuary. The interior of these quaint huts is nothing to rave (nor complain) about, but the exteriors, complete with small balcony, wouldn't look out of place housing a hobbit. Call ahead to reserve because it's a long way to drive to find the place is full.

Getting to Bondla is easiest with your own transport, and it makes a pleasant motorcycle ride from Panaji, Margao or Ponda. By public transport there are buses from Ponda to Usgao village (Rs 5), from where you'll need to take a taxi (Rs 150) for the

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

Spice farms are one of the main reasons to come to Ponda. There are four major spice farms in the Ponda region, each with a slightly different character but all offering an interesting tour for Rs 300, including a traditional lunch. Both Sahakari Spice Farm and Savoi Plantation are favoured by tour companies and charter buses, and the latter is visited by GTDC on its Backwater Thrills tour (p227).

Sahakari Spice Farm (☎ 0832-2312394, 9422057312; www.sahakarifarms.com) enjoys the closest position to Ponda, only 2km away. It also offers the longest tour (2½ hours). When you arrive, you will be attacked with flowers by brightly dressed and enthusiastic staff. There are added attractions such as elephant feeding.

Savoi Plantation (☎ 0832-2340272, 0832-2340243; www.savoiplantations.com) is a long-running and well-organised spice farm. In addition to its spices, Savoi has crops of betel nuts, coconuts and pineapples. There are also two rooms available, both with a bathroom and balcony (Rs 2000, including breakfast, lunch and dinner). The Savoi Plantation also has special cultural nights from Monday to Thursday (Rs 450).

Pascoal Spice Farm (☎ 9422055455, 9422643449; www.pascoalspicevillage.com) is in a secluded area of Khandepar. Its tour takes around 45 minutes. There is also some accommodation (room with/without air-con Rs 1050/550) on this 58-acre property; the rooms are not too fancy, but the farm is a very peaceful place to while away a day or two.

Only 6km from Ponda, **Tropical Spice Plantation** (☎ 0832-2340329; H No A14, Arla Bazar, Ker) is at first sight far more photogenic than the others, with a small bridge leading to the restaurant area, which might afford a glimpse of some birdlife. Its tour takes 45 minutes.

DETOUR: INDIAN(A) JONES AND THE CAVES OF KHANDEPAR

For archaeological enthusiasts and spelunkers, a trip out to the small village of Khandepar will prove rewarding.

Khandepar is 5km northeast of Ponda on the NH (National Highway) 4A. Set back in the dense forest behind the Mandovi River you will find (with some asking around) four rock-cut caves believed to have been created in the laterite around the 12th century, though some archaeologists date their origin back as early as the 9th century. The first of the caves is the largest and the details that remain suggest the caves were probably used by a community of Buddhist monks. The fourth cave confirms this theory; it contains a pedestal used for prayer and meditation. The motif carved onto the ceiling of the first cave is typical of the Kadambas, confirming the popular theory that some time in the 10th or 11th century the Kadambas appropriated the caves and turned them into Hindu temples.

These are amongst Goa's oldest remaining historical treasures, and yet (herein lies the excitement) they were only rediscovered in 1970.

Don't be surprised if no-one knows what you're talking about when you get to the Khandepar junction. Be persistent and ask around until you find someone knowledgeable enough to take you to the site; it's worth the effort to get here before it becomes a prime tourist attraction. Bring a torch. And perhaps a whip.

remaining 10km to the park. Another alternative is to catch any eastbound bus from Ponda along the main highway (NH4A) to the turn-off known as Usgao Tisk, and hope there's a taxi there to take you the 15km to the park or at least to Usgao village.

MOLEM & BHAGWAN MAHAVIR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

☎ 0832

The town of Molem seems to be entirely devoted to serving the stream of tourists who come to visit Dudhsagar Falls and the sanctuary – there are wall-to-wall stalls.

The village of Molem is the gateway to the **Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary** (admission Rs 5, motorcycle/car Rs 10/30, camera/video camera Rs 30/130; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm). With an area of 240 sq km, this is the largest of Goa's four protected wildlife areas; it also contains the 107 sq km Molem National Park. The sanctuary is situated on the eastern border of the state, 53km from Panaji and 54km from Margao, but it is easily reached by both road and rail.

If you're heading to Dudhsagar Falls you probably won't see much wildlife, but there are some well-fed tourist-savvy monkeys hanging around near the falls. As with other Goan wildlife sanctuaries, unless you stay for at least a couple of days you're unlikely to catch a glimpse of many of the animals that inhabit the forest here, including gaurs (Indian bison), sambar, leopards,

chitals (spotted deer), slender loris, jungle cats, Malayan giant squirrels, pythons and cobras. There is an observation platform a few kilometres into the park; the best time to see wildlife is in the early morning or late evening.

The sanctuary's setting in the foothills of the Western Ghats is beautiful and the countryside is some of the most peaceful that you'll find in Goa, so it's a lovely place to spend a day or two. Nearby are also a couple of sights that are definitely worth taking in – notably the ancient temple remains at Tambdi Surla and the cascading waterfall at Dudhsagar.

About 100m west of the GTDC Dudhsagar Resort is the Nature Education Centre, where you can contact the forest officer about the keys for vehicle access through the main park gate, which is about 3km east along the NH4A.

GTDC Dudhsagar Resort (Molem Jungle Resort; ☎ 2612238, 2612319; d with/without AC Rs 650/500; 🕒) is just to the east of the police checkpoint in Molem. The resort is a loud staged affair where the gardens around the restaurant are filled with package-holiday tourists all watching other tourists ride a shackled Indian elephant around the yard.

The main entrance to the park is on the NH4A, which heads eastwards out of Goa towards Belgaum and Londa. It's easy enough to get by public transport to the little truck stop that constitutes the village of

Molem; take any bus to Ponda and change to any bus for Belgaum or Londa. Molem is 28km east of Ponda (Rs 10, 45 minutes).

However, it's far better to travel out here under your own steam on a hired motorcycle, as Molem itself is depressing and all the sights are several kilometres away from the main road. It is extremely hard to find anyone willing to rent you a motorcycle once you get to Molem, and taxis are few and far between.

AROUND MOLEM Tambdi Surla Mahadeva Temple

The 13th-century Mahadeva Temple found at Tambdi Surla is the only surviving structure of the glorious Kadamba dynasty in Goa. As such, it is not only historically interesting but also visually striking, quite unlike anything else in the state.

The temple appears to have survived the ravages of both the Muslim and Portuguese invaders purely by reason of its incredibly isolated position. No-one quite knows why this spot was chosen; there was no road past here and there's no evidence of there having been any major settlement nearby. Furthermore, the high-quality black basalt of which the temple is constructed must have been brought a considerable distance – perhaps from across the Western Ghats themselves, as the rock is nowhere to be found in Goa. All in all, the origins of the temple are something of a mystery. Although it hasn't survived completely unscathed (the headless Nandi bull in the *mandapa* is evidence of some desecration), it has been preserved by the fact that until recently it was only accessible after a trek through the jungle.

The temple itself is very small. At the eastern end, the open-sided *mandapa* is reached via doorways on three sides. The eastern of these entrances faces a set of steps down to the river, where ritual cleansing was carried out before worship. Inside the *mandapa* the plain slab ceiling is supported by four huge **carved pillars**. The clarity of the designs on the stone is testimony not only to the skill of the artisans, but also to the quality of the rock that was imported for the construction. At about head height on each pillar there is a deeply carved groove, which is thought to have once contained small balls carved from the same piece of stone.

Above the groove, the symmetrical discus-shaped section is symbolic of the cymbals used in Hindu services. The best examples of the carvers' skills, however, are the superb **relief panel** depicting a lotus flower, set in the centre of the ceiling, and the finely carved **screen** that separates the outer hall from the *antaralya* (inner area). On either side of the entrance to this area is a slab carving and two niches containing carvings of minor deities. Finally, beyond the inner hall is the *garbhagriha* (sanctum), where the lingam resides.

The outside of the temple is plain. On the tower itself (which appears to have lost its top section) there are three relief carvings depicting the three most important deities in the Hindu pantheon; on the north side (facing towards the access road) is Vishnu, to the west is Shiva and on the south is Brahma. On the level above these three carvings are three more, depicting each of the deities' consorts.

The temple is about 13km north of Molem and the trip out to it along quiet country lanes is wonderful. You need your own transport.

From the Molem crossroads, take the road running north towards Sancordem. After 3km or 4km there's a fork with the remains of an old stone road sign. It's almost invisible, but you need to take the right-hand fork, which, according to the sign, goes to 'Bolkondo'. About 3km on there's a further fork, which is signposted to Tambdi Surla. At the end of this road is a small car park and a short path leading to the temple.

Dudhsagar Falls

Goa's most impressive waterfalls are on the eastern border with Karnataka; at 603m the falls are the second highest in India after Jog Falls. Though the falls are apparently at their best in the monsoon season (when they're inaccessible), even in the winter months they are an impressive sight, enhanced by the train line that skirts quite close to them. The crowds admiring the sight from the foot of the falls often burst into cheers and applause as a train slices through the view. However, reaching them is expensive and time consuming. Getting to Dudhsagar (the name means 'Sea of Milk') will take the best part of a day,

which doesn't leave a great deal of time at the falls themselves.

It's possible to stop at the **Devil's Canyon** en route to the base of the falls. Despite the dramatic name, it's an attractive spot with a deep pool formed between the steep-sided rocks. Locals say that it got its name through being a dangerous spot to swim – reputedly it's extremely deep, with strong underwater currents.

The best way to reach the falls independently is by local train, but with the closing of the Dudhsagar station it's no longer as simple as getting off and walking there. There's a local train at 7.20am from Margao to Colem; check return train times at Margao station. You have to get off at Colem station, where locally controlled 4WDs ferry groups for Rs 1800 per jeep (Rs 300 per head for a group of six) for the approximately 45-minute journey. The views as the train line disappears up into the Western Ghats are undeniably fine.

The jeep takes you through the heart of the wildlife sanctuary, past a number of ex-

tremely scenic jungle and forest areas that would otherwise be inaccessible (there are three rivers to be forded, which would make this trip tricky by motorcycle). Swimming is possible, but don't picture yourself taking a romantic swim on your own – there will be other people here. Many of them. Some people walk the distance to the falls, which would certainly enhance the pleasure of a swim at the base of the waterfalls at the end.

An easier alternative to taking the train is to charter a taxi (or ride a motorcycle) to Molem village (15km from the falls) or Colem station, and pick up a jeep from here. The jeep will cost as much from here as from the station.

The even easier option is to take a GTDC tour, which includes a detour out to Tambdi Surla Mahadeva Temple. It runs on Wednesdays and Sundays from 9am to 6pm (Rs 600), and leaves from both Panaji and Calangute. It also takes you to the Molem Jungle Retreat (p115) for lunch, which isn't included in the tour price.

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