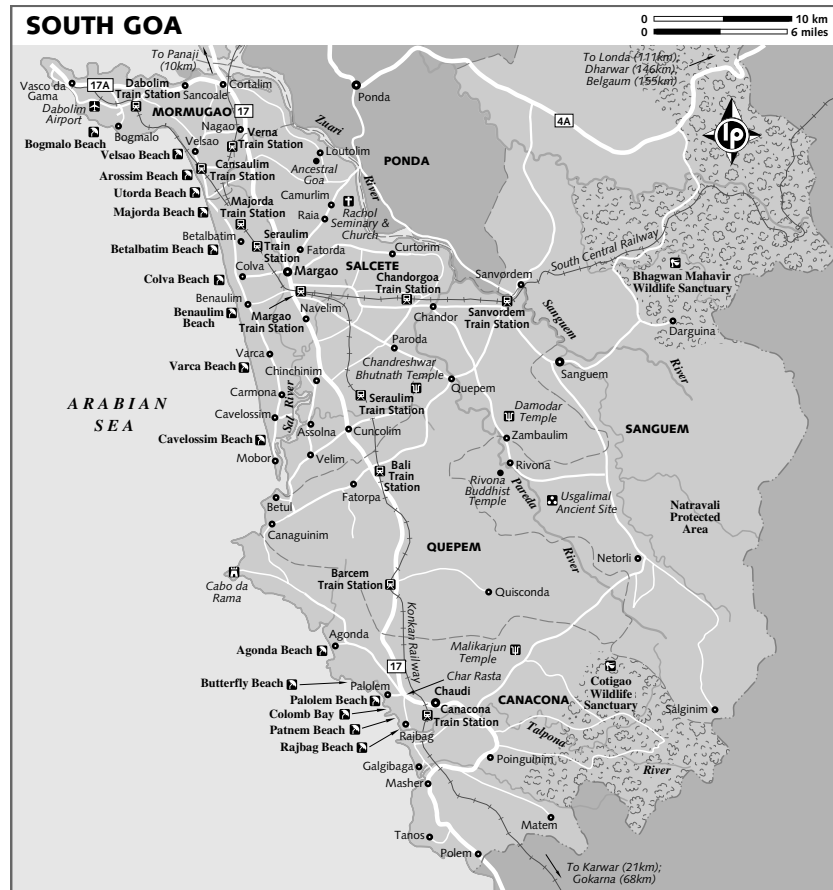


South Goa



Separated from central Goa by the Zuari River, the southern part of the state has a remarkably different character to the north. If anything, the coastline of south Goa is more varied and picturesque, the beaches longer and straighter, the sand more squeaky underfoot, and the villages – even those close to the beaches – retain a very rural feeling. For the moment, fewer visitors head south, which is generally reflected in the level and type of development.

However, big-money developers have punctuated the coast with big-scale developments, and more and more holidaymakers are tiring of the concrete jungles of Calangute and looking for the Goan dream down south. One of Goa's most beautiful beaches is Palolem, which has been well and truly 'discovered' in the last decade by a steady stream of backpackers who are moving camp. But on either side of this are unspoilt patches of sand with much to offer travellers. In short, south Goa is a great place to come to if you want to escape the worst of the holiday crowds. Even if you just want to escape the beaches, there are a number of interesting villages and sights within easy reach of Margao (the administrative centre and transport hub of the region), as well as Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary in the far south.



MARGAO

☎ 0832 / pop 94,392

Margao (Madgaon) is the capital of Salcete taluka (district) and Goa's busiest city. As a hub of economic activity things are quick to develop; the latest feather in its progressive cap is the 8m-high skybus test-track, which was set up here, albeit problematically. For travellers, Margao's attraction lies in its position as the service and transportation hub for south Goa – this is the junction for the South Central Railway and the Konkan Railway. But beyond its logistical value, Margao is a good reminder that there's more to Goa than beaches. The covered market provides a definitive slice of traditional India, and there are Portuguese

houses down elegant avenues in varying states of alluring decay.

Margao holds a large fair to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception around 8 December.

Orientation

In the centre of Margao, the Municipal Gardens consist of a small, shady and rather unkempt patch of grass and trees, around which the life of Margao churns at breakneck speed. Most of the facilities of interest to visitors are around or near this square, and the red-coloured Secretariat Building at the south end of the park is a useful landmark.

Around 1.5km to the north of the park is the Church of the Holy Spirit, and 1km

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spend a couple of days or weeks on postcard-perfect **Palolem Beach** (p191)
- Hire a motorcycle and drive along the picturesque rural coastline from **Benaulim** (p185) to **Bogmalo** (p178)
- Explore the colonial mansions of **Chandor** (p167) and **Loutolim** (p166)
- Travel from Palolem to Rajbag by **bike** (p195), taking some time (say half a day) at Patnem Beach on the way.
- Hire a motorcycle and ride from **Cavelossim** (p187) via the untouched inland to the fortress of **Cabo da Rama** (p189).



beyond this is the main (Kadamba) bus stand, and the new fish-and-produce market. About 1.5km southeast of the Municipal Gardens and beyond the old train station and beyond the old train station (also known as Madgaon Train Station).

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Golden Heart Emporium (☎ 2732450; fax 2736339; Confidant House, Abade Faria Rd; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat) The best bookshop in south Goa. It's about 100m north of the main post office and down a small laneway off Abade Faria Rd. It has a large selection of novels and a whole section dedicated to books about Goa and India. There is also Internet access here.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is much cheaper in Margao than at the beach resorts, and there are plenty of cybercafés to be found.

Cyber Inn (Valaulikar Rd; per hr Rs 25; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri) In the Kalika Chambers.

Cyberlink (Abade Faria Rd; per hr Rs 20; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) In the Caro Centre.

Netzone (Valaulikar Rd; per hr Rs 20; ☎ 8am-11pm) Directly opposite Cyber Inn; has around 10 computers with fast connections.

LIBRARIES

Municipal library (☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) On the west side of the Secretariat Building.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital (Hospicio; ☎ 2705664; Padre Miranda Rd) Has a casualty department and a 24-hour pharmacy. It's about 500m northeast of the Municipal Gardens.

MONEY

There are several ATMs in Margao, including a Centurion Bank ATM located just off Luis Miranda Rd, and a Citibank ATM a few minutes' walk south of the bus stand. UTI Bank has an ATM just south of the roundabout, near the Kadamba bus stand, as well as an ATM on the northeastern corner of the Municipal Gardens.

Bank of Baroda (Isodora Batisata Rd; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) To the east of the Municipal Gardens; gives cash advances on credit cards.

HDFC Bank ATM (Ground fl, Caro Centre; ☎ 24hr) Accepts international cards; opposite the Municipal Gardens.

State Bank of India (Abade Faria Rd; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) On the west side of the Municipal Gardens; changes travellers cheques and cash.

Thomas Cook (☎ 2714768) A reliable place to change money, on the east side of the Municipal Gardens.

POST

The main post office is on the north side of the Municipal Gardens. Poste restante is held in the adjoining building and can be picked up between 8am and 10.30am, and 3pm and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

TELEPHONE

There are plenty of places from which to make international phone calls and send faxes around the Municipal Gardens and in the streets just behind.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC)

Tourist Office (☎ 2712790; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) In the Margao Residency, at the south end of the Municipal Gardens. Staff are friendly and reasonably helpful, and there's an interactive audiovisual information terminal, which is mainly useful for amusing small children.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

International Travels (☎ 3955533) A few doors from Longinhos, this is one of a handful of private bus agencies in this area that books and sells tickets to Mumbai, Bangalore, Hampi and other interstate destinations.

Paramount Travels (☎ 2731150; paramount5@yahoo.com; Shop 5, Commerce House) Right next door to International Travels, this is a well-established and reliable agency handling international and domestic flights.

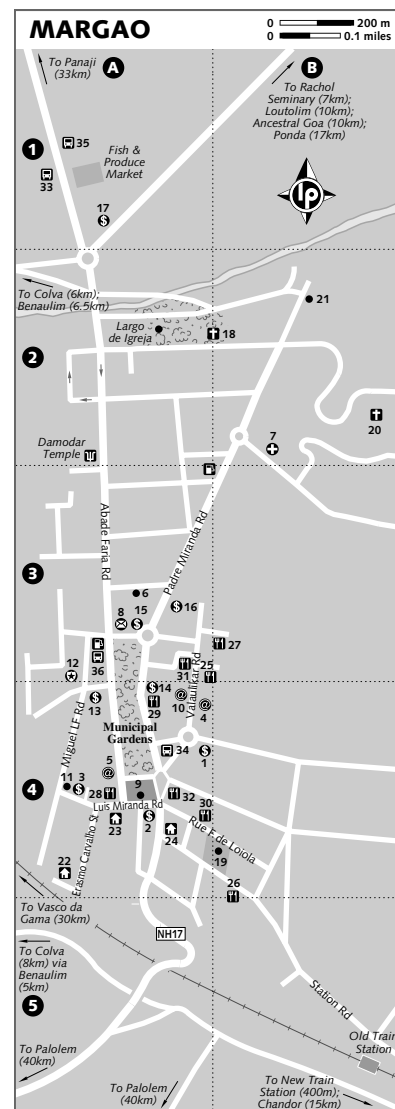
Sights

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The main church in Margao is the town's most interesting attraction. The first church was built here in 1565, on the site of an important Hindu temple. Before the demolition started on the temple, local Hindus managed to rescue the statue of the god Damodara, to whom the building was dedicated. It was secretly moved to a new site in the village of Zambaulim, where there is still a large temple today.

The new church didn't last long – it was burned to the ground by Muslim raiders in the same year it was built. It was soon replaced and a seminary was established, but both were subsequently destroyed, after which the seminary was moved to Rachol.

The present church was built in 1675, and is notable not only for its size and



INFORMATION

Bank of Baroda.....	1 A4
Bank of India.....	2 A4
Centurion Bank ATM.....	3 A4
Cyber Inn.....	4 A4
Cyberlink.....	5 A4
Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC)	
Tourist Office.....	(see 23)
Golden Heart Emporium.....	6 A3
HDFC Bank ATM.....	(see 5)
Hospital.....	7 B2
International Travels.....	(see 11)
Main Post Office.....	8 A3
Municipal Library.....	9 A4
Netzone.....	10 A4
Paramount Travels.....	11 A4
Police Station.....	12 A3
State Bank of India.....	13 A4
Thomas Cook.....	14 A4
UTI Bank ATM.....	15 A3
UTI Bank ATM.....	16 A3
UTI Bank ATM & Citibank ATM.....	17 A1

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Church of the Holy Spirit.....	18 A2
Covered Market.....	19 B4
Mount Church.....	20 B2
Sat Burnzam Ghor.....	21 B2
Secretariat Building.....	(see 9)

SLEEPING

Hotel La Flor.....	22 A4
Margao Residency.....	23 A4
Rukrish Hotel.....	24 A4

EATING

Banjara.....	25 A3
Bombay Cafe.....	26 B4
Gaylin.....	27 B3
Longinhos.....	28 A4
Marliz Cafeteria.....	29 A4
Royal Foods.....	30 A4
Tato.....	31 A3
Venice.....	32 A4

TRANSPORT

Bus Stand.....	33 A1
Buses to Colva, Benaulim & Palolem.....	34 A4
Kadamba Bus Stand.....	35 A1
Old Bus Stand.....	36 A3
Petrol Station.....	(see 36)

it. The ancient pipe organ gives the church a suitably aged feel. Access is via the side entrance.

LARGO DE IGREJA

Largo de Igreja, the area around the Church of the Holy Spirit, features a number of traditional old Goan houses. The most famous is the **Sat Burnzam Ghor** (Seven Towered House). Originally, as its name suggests, there were seven of the distinctive high-peaked gables, of which only three remain, and the house looks imposing rather than attractive. Inside, it's reputed to be

beautifully preserved and furnished, but unfortunately it is not open to visitors.

MOUNT CHURCH

Located about 500m southeast of Sat Burnzam Ghor and a fair climb up Monte Hill, Margao's only hill, Mount Church is a simple whitewashed building, faced by a similarly diminutive piazza cross. A detour up here is worth it for the view: from the shade of a grove of palm trees in front of the church, it's possible to see straight across the coastal plain to the beaches of Colva and Benaulim.

COVERED MARKET

Margao is the market centre of south Goa. You can easily get lost in the covered market, also called New Market, just north of Station Rd. This crowded canopy of colourful stalls is a fun place to wander around, but it's not really a place to hunt for souvenirs. Much of the merchandise here is household items, second-hand junk and cheap Indian clothing, so you'll see lots of local women poking around looking for bargains, and there are tailors' shops and fabric merchants where you can have clothing made or mended.

Sleeping

Margao doesn't have the range of accommodation that you'd expect in a town of this size, and with the beaches of Colva and Benaulim only 6km away, there's no pressing reason to stay here. Some travellers, however, do spend a night or two here when arriving or departing by train, and it makes a reasonable base if you're planning a tour of the attractions east of here. Most of the cheap places are strung out along Station Rd between the Municipal Gardens and the site of the old train station.

Hotel La Flor (☎ 2731402; laflor@goatelecom.com; Erasmo Carvalho St; s/d from Rs 450/550, with AC Rs 580/650; 🍴) By far Margao's best choice, La Flor is clean and efficiently run, away from the hustle and bustle in a quiet corner of town. The 36 rooms come with TV and bathroom, and are great value. There's also a restaurant on site.

Rukrish Hotel (☎ 2715046; s/d without bathroom Rs 125/175, d with bathroom Rs 300) Probably the best of a relatively unappealing lot in this price category. Rooms don't score too high,

but overall it doesn't have the dingy feel that many budget hotels do and it's well located near the town's activity (near the south entrance of the New Market).

Margao Residency (☎ 2715528; Luis Miranda Rd; s/d Rs 425/500, d with AC Rs 650; 🍴) This is the GTDC hotel. Recent renovations have made it a more appealing choice, with plain but clean rooms.

Eating

There are plenty of gems hidden down small laneways in Margao. Hunt around and take your pick.

Longuinhos (☎ 2739908; Luis Miranda Rd; mains Rs 40-90) Opposite the Margao Residency, Longuinhos has been Margao's colonial hang-out since it opened in 1950. Longuinhos has retained some of the charm of that by-gone era and, one suspects, the uniforms. There are an equal number of foreigners, locals and foreign locals sitting under the fans of Longuinhos. A 'tender coconut soufflé' costs Rs 25. The service can be apathetic, but the atmosphere more than compensates.

Bombay Cafe (Station Rd; snacks Rs 10-20) A busy vegetarian place with cheap snacks such as samosas (deep-fried pastry triangles filled with spiced vegetables or meat) and dosas (paper-thin lentil-flour pancakes); prices hover around the Rs 10 mark. It's often so crowded that getting a seat is a challenge, though it's sometimes randomly closed at impractical hours – like lunchtime.

Venice (☎ 2710505; mains Rs 40-150) A garden restaurant with upmarket service but a laid-back atmosphere. The enclosed garden offers a complete escape from the city. Goan, Indian and Chinese dishes are on offer; try the vegetable biryani.

Tato (☎ 2736014; thalis Rs 25; 📞 closed Sun) Down a small street east of the Municipal Gardens is another excellent vegetarian restaurant. If you're indecisive, order a thali (traditional South Indian all-you-can-eat meal), always a magical mystery tour of flavour, and here they're particularly representative of the classic Indian meal.

Banjara (☎ 2714837; D'Souza Chambers, Valaulikar Rd; mains Rs 60-125; 📞 noon-3pm & 7-11pm; 🍴) Margao's best Indian restaurant, specialising in North Indian dishes (around Rs 95) and seafood. The subterranean air-con dining room is intimate and the service is good.

Gaylin (☎ 2733348; Valaulikar Rd; mains Rs 50-95; 📞 11am-3pm & 6.30-11pm) This popular Chinese restaurant is 100m north of Banjara. The dining room is intimate and the menu has a big range of soups, noodles and Cantonese dishes.

Marliz Cafeteria (Padre Miranda Rd) This is a modern, open-fronted café with a wacky design. It looks out at the busy town centre and Municipal Gardens, and is a great spot for coffee and cake while watching the traffic whizz by.

Dalima Fast Food Centre (Erasmo Carvalho St) This tiny place serves up a decent fish curry rice for only Rs 20.

Royal Foods (Rua F de Loiola) Sells the usual bakery items, fresh meat, ice creams, drinks and predominantly chicken-based dishes. It's always immaculate.

Getting There & Away

BUS

All local buses operate from the busy Kadamba bus stand about 2km north of town, but many also stop at the old bus stand in the centre of town. Catch buses to Palolem, Colva and Benaulim from the Kadamba bus stand or from the bus stop on the east side of the Municipal Gardens. All buses coming to Margao from Benaulim and Colva stop by the old bus stand in the centre of town and continue to the Kadamba bus stand.

There is a daily public bus from the Kadamba bus stand to Mumbai (Rs 700, 16 hours), Bangalore (Rs 300, 14 hours) and Pune (Rs 450, 10 hours).

There are also buses to Hubli (Rs 65, six hours), Belgaum (Rs 60, five hours) and Mangalore (Rs 146, 10 hours). A better option for most interstate trips is the long-distance private buses; they are more comfortable, there are more of them and they're no more expensive. Private booking offices are clustered around the Margao Residency along Luis Miranda Rd. Private buses to Mumbai (AC/non-AC Rs 600/350, 12 hours), Pune (Rs 500/300, 11 hours), Bangalore (Rs 700/350, 12 hours) and Hampi (sleeper Rs 550, eight hours) depart from the bus stand opposite the Kadamba bus stand.

Buses to Vasco leave every 10 minutes or so (ordinary/direct Rs 12/15).

Margao has good local bus connections with beaches and other towns in Goa:

Colva Beach There are hourly buses to Colva from the Kadamba bus stand and from the Municipal Gardens (east side), from 7am to 7pm (Rs 7, 20 minutes). Some services go via Benaulim (Rs 4 to Benaulim).

Palolem & Chaudi There are around eight buses a day direct to Palolem from Kadamba bus stand (Rs 18, one hour) and many others heading south to Karwar (Rs 30) that stop in nearby Chaudi, an easy autorickshaw or taxi ride to Palolem, Patnem or even Agonda beaches.

Panaji Buses depart from the Kadamba bus stand approximately every 15 minutes from 6am to 9.15pm (public bus/direct Rs 12/17, about one hour). The alternative route taken by some buses is via Ponda (Rs 9, at least two hours).

You can find buses to most other destinations in Goa from the Kadamba bus stand. There are buses to Mangalore (7.15am and 2.30pm), Bangalore (6pm), Mysore (4.15pm) and Gokarna (1pm). Timetables are approximate; buses leave when full. There are reasonably frequent local buses to Vasco da Gama (for the airport), Ponda, Chandor and Rachol. To the smaller villages, such as Betul (Rs 10), Mobor and Agonda, they're much less frequent, so it's best to make inquiries at the bus stand in advance.

TAXI

Both Colva and Benaulim are close enough to take a taxi without breaking the bank – about Rs 80 from the Municipal Gardens or Kadamba bus stand. If you're solo, a motorcycle taxi to either of the villages costs about Rs 40, and there are no problems taking backpacks. Autorickshaws charge around Rs 60. Prepaid taxis will cost around Rs 180 to Colva and Benaulim.

If you're going further afield, prepaid taxis go from Margao train station to Panaji (Rs 550), Palolem (Rs 550), Calangute (Rs 670), Anjuna (Rs 780) and Arambol (Rs 980). You can bargain cheaper rates from taxis in the town centre and meet with less cut-throat people than those to be found at the prepaid taxi stand.

TRAIN

Margao's new train station, which serves both the Konkan and South Central Railways, is about 1.5km southeast of the town centre; vehicle access is via the road south of the train line. It's a fairly chaos-free train station (and clean thanks in part to signs warning of Rs 100 fines for spitting and

littering). If you're walking there, however, you can cross the tracks at the footbridge past the old station. There's a **reservation hall** (☎ 2712790; 🕒 8am-2pm & 2.15-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) on the 2nd floor of the main building, as well as a **tourist information counter** (☎ 2712790) and retiring rooms. See p234 for train information.

A taxi between the train and bus stations costs about Rs 40 and a motorcycle taxi around Rs 25.

The Konkani Railway provides an alternative to using the buses, but since there are only a handful of services a day, and since buses to Chaudi and Palolem are easy to catch from the main bus stand, the train is only likely to be useful for getting to the far north of the state (eg Arambol). There are half-a-dozen trains a day north via Thivim (Mapusa Rd) Station (2nd class Rs 27, one hour), at least two of which stop at Pernem Station (for Arambol), and three trains south to Canacona (Rs 23, 35 minutes).

AROUND MARGAO

As tempting as it is to head west to the beach, the area to the east and northeast of Margao is a rich patchwork of rice paddy fields, lush countryside, somnolent rural villages, superb colonial houses and a smattering of historical and religious sites. With a day to spare and a hired motorcycle or taxi, you can cover most of the sights listed here, assuming you don't get hopelessly lost, which is easy to do in the tangle of unsigned back roads!

With a bicycle you can do a loop out to Chandor, up to Loutolim via Rachol Seminary and back to Margao (about 45km) in a long day. Finding a detailed map of this area is virtually impossible, and since you'll come to many multidirectional crossroads, the best advice is to keep stopping to ask directions.

Rachol Seminary & Church

The Rachol Seminary and Church is seven kilometres from Margao, near the village of Raia. Although not technically open to visitors, you might be able to find someone to show you around. After some very lean years when the religious orders were banned in Goa, the seminary is now full of life again; men study for seven years here to become priests.

As you enter through the huge front door into a hall with a single central pillar, the two murals are striking – on the left wall is an image of hell, and on the right is an image of heaven.

The Portuguese first came into possession of the fortress that once stood on this site in 1520, when Krishnadevaraya, the Hindu Raja of Vijayanagar, captured it from the Muslim Sultan of Bijapur, Ismail Adil Shah, and voluntarily ceded it to the Portuguese.

The seminary, established under the sponsorship of King Sebastian of Portugal, was built by the Jesuits between 1606 and 1610. It became a noted centre of learning, a position that was enhanced by setting up the third printing press in the Portuguese eastern empire. Among the seminary's most famous members were Father Thomas Stevens, who by 1616 had translated the Bible into Konkani and Marathi, and Father Ribeiro, who produced the first Portuguese-Konkani dictionary in 1626.

In 1762 Rachol was raised to the status of diocesan seminary and in 1833, when other religious institutions in Goa were being forcibly closed, it was saved by its rector, Monsignor Rebello. The buildings you see today were mostly built from the early 17th century, and are contemporaries of Se Cathedral in Old Goa.

The seminary church, dedicated to St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, has been maintained in excellent condition. The reredos fills the whole wall above the altar with its carved and gilded yet simple design. The most striking features are the carved and painted wooden panels that cover the sides of the chancel – a mass of colour and detail. One of the side altars also displays the Menino Jesus, which was originally installed in the Colva church but was taken back to the seminary amid much controversy.

Loutolim

☎ 0832

Ten kilometres from Margao and about 6km north of Rachol is the tiny, peaceful village of Loutolim. If you have your own wheels, the countryside here is a pleasure just to ride through.

Set up purely for tourists, **Ancestral Goa** (☎ 2777034; admission Rs 20, camera Rs 10; 🕒 9am-6.30pm) is a mildly diverting attraction. You

will be shunted from guide to guide, who explain the self-explanatory mock-up scenarios depicting daily life in Goa under the Portuguese. The Portuguese lady being fanned by her Goan servant hardly represents the 'harmony' that it intends to. Another claim to fame at Ancestral Goa (in addition to India's longest laterite sculpture) is a rock known as 'big foot', where you can place your own foot and make a wish. There are unintentionally comical elements to this quirky attraction, like the 'Hidden Turtle' enclosure, which may or may not in fact contain a turtle.

Much more interesting, though not really tourist attractions, are a couple of grand old houses in the village. The largest of these, which visitors are occasionally permitted to view inside, is the **Miranda House** (☎ 2777022), a three-minute walk southwest from the church, down an unsurfaced access road. The two-storey whitewashed house has re-

mained in the hands of the same family through the years. The current owner is well-known artist and illustrator Mario Miranda. The Miranda coat of arms presented by the King of Portugal in 1871 still adorns the front door. This is one of the best existing examples of Goan country-house architecture. Call in advance if you want to visit. **Casa Araujo Alvarez** (🕒 9am-6.30pm; admission Rs 100) is also open to the public.

Chandor

About 15km east of Margao, on the border between Salcete and Quepem talukas, is the small village of Chandor, once the site of the most spectacular city on the Konkani coast, Chandrapur. Capital of the ancient state of Govarashtra, Chandrapur was situated within the loop of the river, which, unbelievable as it may seem today, was large enough to make the city a viable port.

CHANDOR'S COLONIAL MANSIONS

Visiting the superb colonial mansions in Chandor gives you a peek at the opulent lifestyle of the Goan landowners during the height of their fortunes in the Portuguese era. Best known is **Braganza House**, which takes up one complete side of Chandor's village square and dates back to the 17th century. It's now divided into east and west wings – two separate houses – which stretch outwards from a common front entrance. The exterior façade of the mansion, with 24 windows, is the longest in Goa.

Ongoing restoration is gradually returning the house to its former glory, but wandering through the ballrooms with their Italian marble floors, Belgian glass chandeliers and carved rosewood furniture, it's not hard to imagine the sort of parties that were thrown here. The east wing is owned by the Braganza Pereira family, and includes a small family chapel containing a carefully hidden relic of St Francis Xavier – a fingernail. The clutter of bric-a-brac collected by the family over the years gives the house an air of faded magnificence. The original owner of the house, Braganza Pereira, was knighted by the King of Portugal and given this land in the 17th century. Generations later, the mansion was divided into two halves: Menezes Braganza (west wing) and Braganza Pereira (east wing).

The west wing is crammed with beautiful furniture and Chinese porcelain from Macau. The two large rooms behind the entrance halls contain Dr Menezes Braganza's extensive library – Luís de Menezes Braganza was a journalist and a leader in the Goan Independence movement.

Both houses are open daily from 10am to 5pm, but you may want to call ahead to ensure the **owners** (Braganza Pereira ☎ 2784227, Menezes Braganza ☎ 2784201) will be there, or else you will be lead around by staff who can do little more than point at furniture and name it. There is a box where you can leave a donation towards the upkeep of the mansion, though a minimum of Rs 100 is sometimes insisted on. The front door of the house is usually left open; head up the stairs and ring the small doorbell you will find on the wall.

Nearby, **Fernandes House** (☎ 2784245) is not as grand, but it has a longer history and the enthusiastic family who live here have put in effort to make your visit interesting. The original Hindu house here dates back more than 500 years, while the Portuguese section was built by the Fernandes family in 1821. One feature is the secret basement hideaway with an escape tunnel to the river, which the Hindu occupants used to flee attackers. A donation is also be appreciated here; given the extensive maintenance that is required, Rs 50 to 100 is reasonable.

Although there was a town here during the time of the Mauryan empire (321–184 BC), Chandrapur's promotion to capital city came later. After centuries of infighting following the demise of the Mauryans, the Bhojas eventually gained control of the area, and ruled almost undisturbed from AD 375 to 525, promoting trade with other areas along the Indian coast and further afield. In 979 the Kadamba dynasty came to power, ruling from Chandrapur until 1052.

Ironically, the Kadambas' success signalled the end of Chandrapur's pre-eminence; as the empire expanded, the Kadambas captured the port of Govepuri on the Zuari River. Within a short time more trade was flowing through Govepuri than Chandrapur, and the capital was shifted in 1053. When Govepuri was levelled by the Muslims in 1312, the Kadambas moved the seat of power back to Chandrapur, though it was not long before Chandrapur itself was sacked in 1327. There's now an archaeological site in the village, where the foundations of an 11th-century Hindu temple and stone Nandi (the bull, vehicle of Shiva) have been unearthed.

Chandor's premier attraction today is its beautifully preserved colonial mansions (see p167); two of the grandest, **Braganza House** and **Fernandes House**, are open to the public.

On 6 January Chandor is one of three Goan villages that host the **Feast of the Three Kings** (the others are Reis Magos and Cansaulim), a colourful festival in which local boys re-enact the arrival of the three kings bearing gifts for Christ.

Damodar Temple

Approximately 12km southeast of Chandor and 22km from Margao on the border of Quepem and Sanguem talukas is the small village of **Zambaulim**, home to the Damodar Temple. The deity in the sanctum was rescued in 1565 from the main temple in Margao, which was destroyed by the Portuguese to allow the Church of the Holy Spirit to be raised symbolically on the site.

The temple is fairly modern in appearance but the ancient ablutions area, built 200m back from the main buildings on the banks of the Kushavati River, is attractive and the water is said to have medicinal properties. The celebration of Shigmotsav (Shigmo) here is spread over several days, and is particularly colourful (see p218).

Rivona Buddhist Caves

Continuing south from Zambaulim for about 3km, the road passes through **Rivona**, which consists of little more than a few houses spread out along the highway. As the road leaves the village, curling first to the left and then right, there is a small sign on the left, pointing to Shri Santhasa Gokarn. A short way up the dirt track, which comes to an end at a tiny temple, the **Rivona caves** (also called Pandava caves) are on the left. You need your own transport to get here.

It's thought that the caves were occupied by Buddhist monks, who settled here some time in the 6th or 7th century AD. There's little to see, but the tiny compartments are an interesting reminder that religions other than Hinduism, Islam and Christianity also made it to Goa. There's a small staircase cut through the rock between the upper and lower levels of the caves; if you plan to look inside you'll need a torch.

On the other side of the road, some way down the slope and off to the left, is another larger cave that is also believed to have been used by the monks.

Usgalimal Rock Carvings

Carved into laterite stone on the banks of the Kushavati River in Sanguem taluka, these prehistoric **petroglyphs** (rock art) show various scenes, including a dancer, wild animals, a pregnant woman and a man with a harpoon. They are thought to be the work of one of Goa's earliest tribes, the Kush. The carvings are underfoot, rather than on a wall and, depending on the light, it can be difficult to make out the shapes.

To get here, continue past Rivona for about 6km and look out for the green-and-red Forest Department 'protected area' signs. An unsealed road off to the right of the main road leads 1.5km down to the river bank and carvings.

Chandreshwar Bhutnath Temple

Approximately 14km southeast of Margao near the village of Paroda, a number of hills rise out of the plain, the highest of which is Chandranath Hill (350m). At the top in a small clearing stands the Chandreshwar Bhutnath Temple, a small but attractive building in a lovely setting.

(Continued on page 177)

(Continued from page 168)

Although the present buildings date from the 17th century, there has been a temple here for more than 1500 years. The site is dedicated to Chandreshwar, an incarnation of Shiva who is worshipped as Lord of the Moon. Consequently it is laid out so the light of the full moon shines into the sanctum and illuminates the deity, which is carved from the natural rock. It is said that when the moonlight falls on it, the lingam (phallic symbol of Shiva) oozes water.

Leaving through the side entrance there is another small shrine standing separately that is dedicated to the god Bhutnath, who is worshipped in the form of a simple stone pinnacle that sticks out of the ground.

To get to the temple you will need your own transport as it's a fair way off the beaten track. Head to Paroda, and ask there for the turn-off that takes you up the narrow winding hillside road. There's a small parking area near the top, from which the approach to the temple is via a steep flight of steps.

VASCO DA GAMA

☎ 0832 / pop 97,000

Vasco da Gama is a busy port and was once a major transport hub for travellers. These days it's a noisy, industrial town with a seedy feel on its outskirts. It's only 4km from Dabolim Airport, so if you fly into Goa it's possible you may want to spend a night in Vasco, but there's little need.

Situated at the base of the isthmus leading to Mormugao Harbour, Vasco sports an oil refinery and Goa's biggest red-light district at Baina, where there's also a small (filthy) beach and a steady influx of sailors and truck drivers. The city has a reputation for being the crime centre of Goa – you're safe enough in the town centre, but it is probably unwise to go wandering by yourself much further than the main part of town at night.

Information

Centurion Bank ATM (Pe José Vaz Rd; ☎ 24hr) Near the Vasco Residency.

GTDC Tourist Information (☎ 2512673; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat) In the foyer of the Vasco Residency.

HFDC Bank ATM (☎ 24hr) Opposite the bus station, and also just west of the train station along Swatantra Path.

Internet Cafés (Pe José Vaz Rd; per hr Rs 25) There are a handful of Internet cafés in the Apna Bazar Building.

Kamaxi Book House (GTDC Residency) The only bookshop in town is in the lobby of the GTDC Residency.

Mubeen Travels (☎ 2512345; fax 2513106; www.mubeen.com) A professional travel agent for booking flights.

State Bank of India (FL Gomes Rd) Will exchange both travellers cheques and cash.

Sleeping

Twiga Lodge (☎ 2512682; d Rs 200) Near the main bus stand, Twiga Lodge is the best rock-bottom budget option in town. The old Portuguese house looks odd amongst all the nondescript blocks of Vasco. There are just five basic rooms with bathrooms. It's often full so call ahead.

Maharaja (☎ 2514076; mahahot@sancharnet.in; d Rs 500) Maharaja is a bit further away from the centre than the Vasco Residency, but has more character. Standard rooms are quite spacious, and have hot water and TV. You can pay more (Rs 700 to 1300) and get a bit more class but not much more quality.

Vasco Residency (☎ 2513119; s/d Rs 275/350, d with AC Rs 600; ☎) This hotel is secure and central. Like most GTDC hotels it's a bit run-down, but it's the best budget place in the city centre.

Hotel Karma Plaza (☎ 2518928; karmas@rediffmail.com; Rajendra Prasad Ave; r standard with/without AC Rs 999/899, deluxe Rs 1299/1199; ☎) This is the pick of the midrange places. It's clean and the hotel is part of a modern shopping complex with restaurants. Rooms attract a 10% tax.

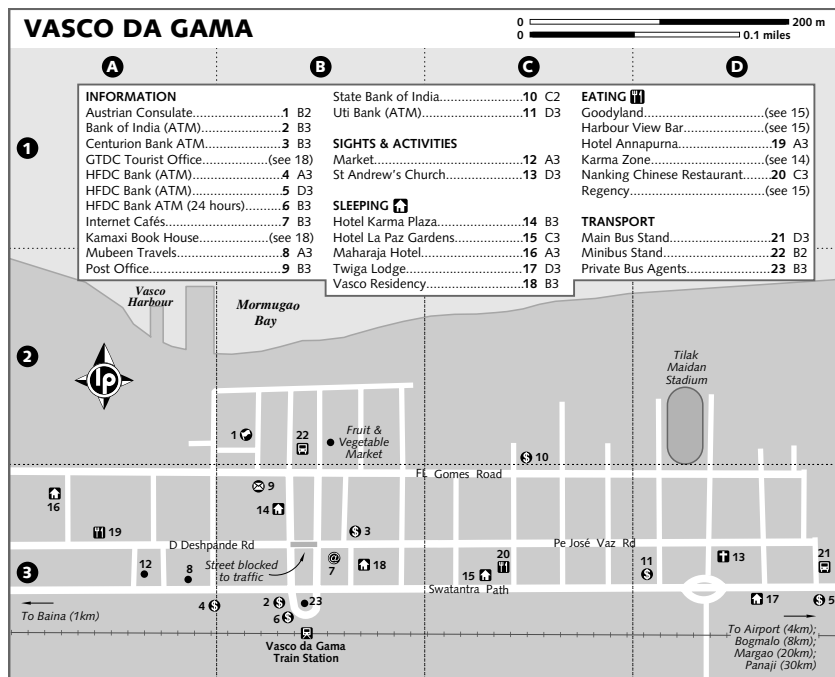
Hotel La Paz Gardens (☎ 2512121; www.hotella pazgardens.com; Swatantra Path; s/d standard Rs 1200/1500, premium Rs 1700/2000, executive ste Rs 2200/2500, deluxe ste Rs 3000/3500; ☎) This is the top place in town. It's a typical business hotel with 72 rooms with air-con, satellite TV, a gym, a sauna and three restaurants.

Eating & Drinking

There are plenty of cheap thali places around the centre. Karma Plaza shopping centre has clean, modern restaurants, including Ginza for Chinese and Japanese and Temptations for burgers or ice cream.

Hotel Annapura (mains Rs 20–50) Hotel Annapura, near the market, is clean and the best budget option in town; vegetarian thalis cost Rs 20.

Goodyland (mains Rs 20–50) This is a family-friendly fast-food place serving good pizzas,



vegetarian patties, sausage rolls and refreshing ice cream.

Nanking Chinese Restaurant (mains Rs 40-120) Around the corner from Goodyland, it has reasonably good Cantonese food, but is a dark place.

Regency (Swatantra Path; mains Rs 80-150) At Hotel La Paz Gardens, the Regency is one of the better restaurants in Vasco da Gama, specialising in Goan and Indian food. Also here at the La Paz is the top-floor Harbour View Bar.

Karma Zone (☎ 2511028; mains 45-90) A predominantly Chinese and Indian restaurant with a couple of Japanese options thrown in. A clean air-conditioned affair.

Getting There & Away

Express minibuses run nonstop from the city bus stand north of the train station to Margao (Rs 15, 45 minutes) and Panaji (Rs 17, 45 minutes). There are also regular buses from here to the airport (Rs 5) and Bogmalo (Rs 6). For long-distance state buses you have to go to Margao or Panaji, but private buses to Mumbai (Rs 300)

and Bangalore (Rs 500) depart daily from outside the train station, where there are booking agents. Heading from the main bus stand near the fruit and vegetable market east towards the airport, there is another bus stand where you can flag down east-bound buses.

A taxi from the airport costs around Rs 60 and an autorickshaw Rs 50.

BOGMALO

☎ 0832

Eight kilometres southeast of Vasco, and only 4km from the airport, Bogmalo Beach is a small, sandy cove dominated by the huge, five-star Bogmalo Beach Resort, which somehow evaded the restriction requiring all hotels to be built at least 500m from the high-tide line. Somewhat surprisingly, given it's proximity to Vasco da Gama, the beach is quite pleasant despite (or perhaps because of) the air of exclusivity. Having said that, there's nothing overly special about it compared to the vast expanses of beach you'll find further south, and it's not as economical.

Sights & Activities

Bogmalo is a bit of water-sports centre – you can hire windsurfers, jet skis and boats. **Goa Diving** (☎ 2555117, 2538204; www.goadiving.com) is behind Joets Guest House and offers a full range of courses, including introductory dives (Rs 2200), four-day PADI open-water courses (Rs 15,000), advanced courses (Rs 10,000), rescue diver courses (Rs 15,000) and dive master courses (Rs 20000). Guided dives cost Rs 1430 (one tank) or Rs 2200 (two tanks), including equipment. Goa Diving uses Grande Island (off Bogmalo Beach) and Pigeon Island (off the coast from Murudeshwar, 85km south).

At the naval base, on the road above Bogmalo Beach, is the **Naval Aviation Museum** (☎ 5995525; adult/child Rs 15/5, camera/video Rs 10/25; ⏰ 10am-5pm). It's easy to spot by its inhospitable fence, and the preserved military planes sitting just behind it. There are displays on the history of India's navy along with uniforms, model naval ships and photographs. There are also some very blokey rooms containing heavy-duty weaponry and an evocatively damaged ejet seat. This is the man's revenge for all the shopping excursions he's had to endure.

Sleeping & Eating

In keeping with its exclusivity, there are only a handful of sleeping places in Bogmalo. Apart from hotel restaurants, there are a few beach shacks serving the usual fare of seafood, continental dishes and breakfasts but they're more expensive than you'll find elsewhere in Goa – some even quote menu prices in pounds sterling!

Coconut Creek (☎ 2538090; fax 2538880; cottages from Rs 2950; ☞ ☞) Stylish cottages are set up around a pool in a coconut grove, with laid-back but attentively choreographed ambience permeating every detail of every room. The self-contained experience of Coconut Creek, is one that may be a highlight of your time in Goa. This is an entirely quiet Goan getaway, and it's only a two-minute walk to the beach.

Joets Guest House (☎ 2538036; joets@sancharnet.in; d Rs 2500) Joets is a lively upmarket place, with refurbished suites. The bar and restaurant in this clean blue-and-white building is consistently popular, and staff are often in a tizz trying to keep up with it all. It's often full from mid-December.

Sarita's Guest House (☎ 2538965; saritasguest-house@rediffmail.com; d with/without AC Rs 1100/750; ☞ ☞) Sarita's has clean but unremarkable rooms. There is an understated common balcony with an unimpeded view of the beach. Prices fluctuate depending on the time of year.

Bogmalo Beach Resort (☎ 2538222; bbrtsl@sancharnet.in; s/d standard US\$80/90, deluxe US\$140/150; ☞ ☞) This formidable high-rise presides over the southern end of Bogmalo Beach, and affords a lovely view of the beach. All rooms face the ocean. There's a pool, restaurant, casino and large breezy foyer that extends from reception to the rear of the building and is a nice place to sit. Buffet meals are reasonable value for this type of establishment (breakfast/lunch/dinner Rs 175/275/350).

Getting There & Away

An irregular bus service runs between Bogmalo and Vasco da Gama (Rs 6, 25 minutes). Buses depart from the car park in front of the entrance to the Bogmalo Beach Resort. Taxis wait in the same area; a return trip costs around Rs 150.

VELSAO & MAJORDA

This 6km-long stretch of beaches (Velsao, Arossim, Utorda and Majorda) is an undeveloped patch of Goa, dotted with just a few beach shacks at entry points from the road, and the occasional hotel. Almost immediately upon leaving Colva and entering this region, the pace notably slows down. Time spent meandering through coconut groves and villages is a respite from tourism and an insight into rural Goa.

Sleeping

Though the area primarily caters for the more upmarket traveller, there are a handful of small guesthouses along Majorda Beach Rd, which still have a freshness that many of those in the more popular areas have long lost.

BUDGET

Dom Pedro's House (☎ 713251; r with/without AC Rs 600/500; ☞ ☞) A two-storey house set in a perfect patch of Goa, replete with smiling people milling about in the countryside. Rooms are ideal if you're looking to immerse yourself in the quiet life for a while.

Rainbow's End (☎ 9822586596; shalome81@satyam.net.in; r Rs 600) An ideal place for those looking to stay for a while. These self-contained units are on the corner of the Beach and Majorda Beach Rds, and comfortably accommodate three people.

MIDRANGE

Casa Ligorio (☎ 2755405; www.casaligorio.com; Utorda Beach, Utorda-Majorda, Salcete; d with AC Rs 2000; 🏠) A proud modern building down a quiet private street with nine impeccably kept rooms, all with fridge and private balcony overlooking rice fields and palm trees. Rooms are not cheap, but you'll feel like you're getting a good deal compared to your neighbours at the overpriced Hotel Keniworth, who are paying hundreds (of US dollars, not rupees). Breakfast is included in the price. The beach is a nice walk down a quiet rural street.

Palm View Guest House (☎ 2881591; palmview4@hotmail.com; Rs 1000) A very pleasant place with private rooms built around a blue pool. Rooms are slightly small, the bathrooms especially so, but otherwise are good value. At the time of research the owners were in the throes of building more rooms, which will be needed when it becomes as popular as it should be.

Hotel Shangrila (☎ 2881542; www.shangrilagoa.com; r with/without AC Rs 900/700; 🏠) This long-running hotel hasn't yet grown tired. There is nothing fancy about the rooms, but nor is there anything lacking – all have hot water and TVs. There's also a very pleasant restaurant attached.

TOP END

Horizons Beach Resort (☎ 8322754923; www.horizonbeachresortgoa.com; Velsao Beach; r/ste Rs 2375/2850; 🏠) A series of yellow Mediterranean-style buildings and a simple bright-blue pool. The resort is set back away from the beach, but within walking distance. Rooms are not as elegant as the building exteriors would lead you to believe, but are certainly up to scratch for this pricey category.

Majorda Beach Resort (☎ 2754871; www.majordabeachresort.com; s/d Rs 6750/7500; 🏠) A five-star resort with everything necessary to befit the name. If you are accustomed to this level of luxury, there is nothing that particularly distinguishes this resort from any other.

Eating

Surprisingly for so quiet an area, there is an impressive collection of restaurants in this area, hidden away in coconut groves and small streets off the road. There are some absolute dining treats here, if you know where to find them.

Skie Grille (☎ 3953053; www.skiegrille.com; mains Rs 100-200; 🕒 6.30-11.30pm) The recently established Skie Grille offers you the chance to 'dine with history'. The dining area is set up outside a spectacularly lit 450-year-old palatial home and whitewashed chapel. The affable husband-and-wife team behind this project plan to open an indoor dining area soon. Imaginatively created grilled dishes include chicken citrus kebab with orange sauce, and prawn with rosemary and wine. There are some exquisite desserts; try the grilled cinnamon apple. The Skie Grille is near Piedade chapel, between the Keniworth and Majorda hotels in Utorda.

Martin's Corner (☎ 2880061, 2880413; www.martinscornergoa.com; Betalbatim, Salcete; mains Rs 50-350) A must-do if you're in the area. It's enormously popular due to its great menu, often charismatic staff and finely tuned atmosphere. Mains are surprisingly still cheap, when they could arguably justify charging more as rent for the detail-laden atmosphere that is oddly reminiscent of a German-style restaurant. They have some kind of live entertainment every night.

Pentagon (☎ 2881402; mains Rs 90-300) Near the entrance to the Majorda Beach Resort is a partly undercover and partly open-air restaurant catering to resident tourists. There are retro and jazz nights.

COLVA

☎ 0832 / pop 10,200

Colva has changed a lot since its days as a sleepy fishing village. It's now the main package-holiday resort of south Goa, but you can easily find quiet stretches of beautiful beach to the north and south of the main village.

This peaceful yet bustling atmosphere has made Colva popular with an older crowd of British, European and domestic holidaymakers, and with weekending Indian families avoiding the hype of Calangute. The market area and road leading to the main beach is lined with souvenir stalls, restaurants and midrange hotels, but walk

or cycle a kilometre or two in either direction and you'll find parched farmland, coconut groves and fish drying in the sun.

Orientation

The centre of action in Colva is the roundabout area at the end of the road to the beach. This is where the taxis wait, the fruit vendors ply their trade, and a dozen or so small restaurants and shops are to be found. Colva village, where you'll find the church, post office and other facilities, is strung out a long way back along the road to Margao.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Damodar Bookshop (Colva Beach Rd) In the huddle of shops near the end of the beach road. There isn't an enormous choice, but you'll find some beach reading.

INTERNET ACCESS

Hello Mae Communications (Colva Beach Rd; per hr Rs 40) Close to the beach.

IDA Online (Beach Rd; per hr Rs 25; 🕒 10am-1am) The cheapest Internet café in town. Also has a photocopy machine (Rs 1 per page).

MONEY

Near the seafront are several travel agencies that keep longer hours than banks, and can efficiently change money and give credit-card cash advances.

Bank of Baroda (🕒 9am-1pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am-11am Sat) Near the church; will change cash and travellers cheques, and give cash advances on MasterCard and Visa.

CICI Bank ATM (Colva Beach Rd) At Vincy's Beach Resort.

Meeting Point Travel (☎ 2788003, 2788005; fax 278804; 🕒 9am-6pm) Has a money exchange service.

UTI Bank ATM (Colva Beach Rd; 🕒 24hr) Near Gatsby's nightclub.

POST

Post office (☎ poste restante 9am-1pm, 2-4pm) On the lane that runs past the eastern end of the church.

TELEPHONE

World Linkers (☎ 2788064; world_linkers@hotmail.com; H No 405, 4th Ward) A reliable place to recharge phone cards and make international calls.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There's no official tourist office in town, and staff at the **GTDC Colva Residency** (☎ 2788047, 2788048) can't do much more than herd you onto GTDC tours.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Meeting Point Travel (☎ 2788003, 2788005, fax 278804; 🕒 9am-6pm) The most professional travel agent in town can help with money exchange and travel arrangements.

Sights & Activities

Founded in 1630 and rebuilt in the 18th century, the **Church of Our Lady of Mercy** contains the statue of the Menino (Baby) Jesus, famous throughout Goa for its miracle-working abilities (see below).

Water sports are prevalent in Colva. You won't have trouble finding operators hanging around; it's more difficult to avoid them. Parasailing costs around Rs 800 per two people (Rs 500 per single). Stand there long enough looking curious (or feigning indifference) and you'll be approached by operators like Chris Watersports or Ruena.

THE MIRACLES OF MENINO JESUS

The original carving of the Menino Jesus was found in 1640 by a Jesuit missionary, Father Bento Ferreira, after he had been shipwrecked off the coast of Mozambique. In 1648 when Father Ferreira became the first vicar at the Church of Our Lady of Mercy in Colva, he brought the statue with him and soon noticed a strange light emanating from it. Within a short space of time it had become known for granting favours.

When the Jesuits were forced to leave Goa in 1834, they insisted that the statue should go with them, although one ring that had been on the finger of the carving was left behind in the church. This was placed on the finger of a replacement statue. Immediately the miracles started again, while the original statue, which now resides in the chapel of Rachol Seminary, is said never to have granted another request.

On the feast day, on the second Monday in October, the Menino is brought out, and there's a fair. Among those who make a special effort to appeal to the statue are young men and women in search of a partner, to whom the infant is said to be especially favourable.

COLVA & BENAULIM

0 500 m
0 0.3 miles

INFORMATION

Bank of Baroda.....	1	D2
Bank of Baroda.....	2	D4
Damodar Bookshop.....	3	C2
GK Tourist Centre.....	4	D4
Hello Mae Communications.....	5	C3
ICI ATM.....	(see 41)	
Ida Online.....	6	C3
Internet.....	(see 4)	
Meeting Point Travel.....	7	C3
Police.....	8	D3
Post Office.....	9	D3
UTI Bank ATM.....	10	C3
World Linkers.....	11	C3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Chris Watersports.....	12	B3
Pedro's.....	(see 50)	
Pele's Watersport.....	13	D5
Travels Etcetera.....	(see 13)	
William's Beach Retreat1.....	(see 43)	

SLEEPING

Amigo Plaza.....	14	C2
Anthy's Guest House.....	15	B4
Benema Guest House.....	16	C3
Bollywood Sea Queen.....	17	C1
Carina Beach Resort.....	18	C5
Cocohuts.....	19	B4
Colva Beach Resort.....	(see 51)	
D'Souza Guest House.....	20	D4
Failaka.....	21	D4
Furtado's Beach House.....	22	B4
Graciano Cottages.....	23	C2
Hotel Lucky Star.....	24	B2
Jacinta Moraes Tourist House.....	25	D5
Joema Tourist Home.....	26	C2
Jymi's.....	27	C3
L'Amour Beach Resort.....	28	C4
Libra.....	29	C5
Longuinhos Beach Resort.....	30	B2
Ma Mickey Tourist Home.....	31	C3
Navin's Inn.....	32	B1
O'Palmar Beach Cottages.....	33	D5
Oshin.....	34	D5
Palm Grove Cottages.....	35	C5
Rosario's Inn.....	36	C5
Rosman Guest House.....	37	C3
Sam's Cottages.....	38	C1
Sea Pearl.....	(see 52)	
Star Beach Resort.....	39	C3
Tansy Cottages.....	40	C4
Vincy Beach Resort.....	41	C2
Vista de Colva.....	42	C2
William's Beach Retreat.....	43	C3

EATING

Dehli Express.....	44	C3
Dominick's.....	45	B3
Johny's.....	46	B4
Longuinhos.....	(see 30)	
Malibu Restaurant.....	47	C5
Palm Garden Restaurant.....	(see 35)	
Papillon.....	48	B3
Pasta Hut.....	49	B2
Pedro's Bar & Restaurant.....	50	B4
Sagar Kinara.....	51	C2
Sea Pearl.....	52	C2
Sea, Sun & Sand.....	(see 45)	

DRINKING

Boomerang.....	53	B2
Shalom.....	(see 42)	

ENTERTAINMENT

Gatsby's.....	54	C3
---------------	----	----

TRANSPORT

Bus Stand.....	55	C2
Bus Stand.....	56	D4

ARABIAN SEA

Head to **Williams Beach Retreat** to relax by the pool. For Rs 50 you can spend half a day eating by the pool or drinking a beer at its swim-up bar.

Tours

The same people who organise water sports often arrange dolphin trips too. If you don't

feel comfortable dealing with a tout, ask at Domnick's (p184), which runs 45-minute trips for Rs 300 per head.

Hello Mae Communications (☎ 2780108) arranges bus rides to the Anjuna flea market on Wednesday (Rs 150). It sometimes promotes the tour in beach shacks. This is a good option if you're not travelling up

north but want to see the market, given that getting there independently requires three bus changes (Margao–Panjim–Mapusa) or an expensive taxi ride.

Sleeping BUDGET

There is a good range of budget accommodation in Colva, ranging from well-run hotels with restaurants, to rooms in family houses.

Navin's Inn (☎ 2788550, 2732575, 2737509; carvin@satyam.net.in; H No 290/3, 3rd Ward; s without bathroom Rs 200, d with bathroom Rs 300-400) A pleasant place to stay at the quiet north end of town. Rooms are clean and private; doubles have bathrooms and vary slightly in price depending on size. The one and only single room is smaller and doesn't have a bathroom. Navin's Inn is unobtrusively well run, and attracts Europeans who stay for months on end. Book ahead.

Sam's Cottages (☎ 2788753; r Rs 300) Across the road from Navin's Inn, Sam's Cottages has recently expanded and has a range of rooms around a courtyard. There's also a restaurant on site. Call ahead; it's often full.

Hotel Lucky Star (☎ 2788071; pradorbarad@hotmail.com; r Rs 450-500) An overpriced but popular choice, near Longuinhos Beach Resort. Rooms are quite large with cold-water bathrooms and safes. Ask for a newer room; they're less dingy and stuffy than the old rooms behind the restaurant (Rs 450). It has a popular restaurant and small, sociable bar.

Sea Pearl (☎ 2780176; downstairs/upstairs r Rs 370/450) A great budget option, if you're lucky enough to get a room. Downstairs rooms are small and entirely comfortable, but upstairs rooms with private balconies are the real winners. Clean bathrooms, TV, plenty of space to do whatever requires space and lots of natural light. Good value.

Jymi's (☎ 2788016; r Rs 400) Jymi's is well located just behind the heart of town. Rooms are spacious and all have bathrooms.

At the budget end of the budget range, are some respectable choices. One of the best is **Ma Mickey Tourist Home** (☎ 2788190; r Rs 200), which has four spacious, immaculate and airy rooms, all adjoining a common area with a TV. The bathroom is clean and the atmosphere is homely but private. **Benema Guest House** (☎ 2788698; r Rs 200) is run by

a very pleasant family and has rooms of a decent size. If they're all full, try nearby **Rosman Guest House** (☎ 2489341; Novovaddo; r Rs 150), which has a few dingy rooms behind a very nice house.

Hidden in the cluster of coconut trees behind the main road are a few options. Check them all out before you commit to one:

Garden Cottages (☎ 2780776; d Rs 250) A nice and peaceful choice with well-maintained rooms that have their own veranda; it doesn't feel like a hotel.

Joema Tourist Home (☎ 2888782; 395, 4th Ward) Next door to Garden Cottages with a 'candlelight café' in a comfortably secluded garden setting.

Casa Roiz (☎ 2788767; www.casaroiz.com; 393 Four Crossroads, 4th Ward, Colva Beach; r Rs 500) A bizarre out-of-place building that feels like it has been deserted by all but the cleaners and the quirky woman who ages behind the tinted glass, waiting to 'interview' potential guests. But rooms are spacious and clean with hot-water bathrooms and small balconies.

MIDRANGE

William's Beach Retreat (☎ 2788153, 2780303, 2788056; www.goagateway.com; r with/without AC Rs 1500/1200; ☎ ☎) William's has really got its act together. Rooms are pricey but bright and happy, and the hotel is well run, with an airy restaurant that is out the front but off the street.

Amigo Plaza (☎ 2789285, 2789384; www.amigo plaza.com; r with/without AC Rs 1500/1000; ☎ ☎) A good midrange choice with absolutely immaculate rooms that have hot water and TV. Angled rooms remove the box feel of many hotels, and there are balconies that sit around the simple but pleasant garden. Discounts can be arranged for long-stayers and good bargainers.

THE MORNING CATCH

Colva's days as a sleepy fishing village are long past but the activities of the local fisherman in their motorised outrigger boats are still one of the highlights of the day. Rise early (around 7am) and head down to the beach north of the main access road (in front of the Lucky Star restaurant) to see locals carrying baskets of fish – mostly small-fry mackerel caught in nets – ashore and dumping them in drying pens. It's a great photo opportunity.

Graciano Cottages (☎ 2788787, 2789022, 3955700; gracianogoa@sify.com; r with/without AC Rs 800/700, all incl breakfast; 🏠) Graciano is a pleasant mid-range choice. Rooms all have satellite TV.

In the category of 'beach resorts' that sound better than they are:

Star Beach Resort (☎ 2788166; fax 2788020; d Rs 1000-2500) Has a pool, Ayurvedic massage and a travel counter. Rooms all have cable TV.

Longinhos Beach Resort (☎ 2788068; www.longinhos.net; s with/without AC Rs 1500/1300, d Rs 1700/1400; 🏠) Staff sometimes seem to have got out of the wrong side of bed, and the noise can get downright irritating at the open-air restaurant; it's popular nonetheless.

Colva Beach Resort (☎ 2788053, 2788043, 2788135; fax 2788134; r standard/superior Rs 600/1500; 🏠) The pool is uninviting, given its green colour and the people hanging around to watch swimmers. Saved by its proximity to the beach and the couple of good restaurants. The manager is keen to use his power to discount so it's a good fall-back when pickings are slim elsewhere.

TOP END

Vista de Colva (☎ 2788144; www.vistadecolva.com; r Rs 3000; 🏠) A crisp, fresh and classy hotel in a sometimes unkempt, stale and tacky town, Vista de Colva stands out. Rooms are pleasant and staggered casually around the pool. There's nothing oppressively opulent about Vista de Colva, it's just a well-tended and confidently stylish place to stay. Lavish breakfasts cost extra (Rs 500).

Bollywood Sea Queen (☎ 2789040; www.bollywoodhotel.com; r Rs 3000-4000; 🏠) The most top-end place in town, but with little else to strongly recommend it other than a groovy name. Bollywood Sea Queen feels overpriced given that many of the balconies have no discernible view, but its secluded location does give it a 'world of its own' feel.

Vincy Beach Resort (☎ 2788087; r Rs 2000; 🏠) This place is at the cheaper end of top-end accommodation, with a swimming pool, a popular restaurant and everything that a place in this price range should have. However, it's looking a bit tired.

Eating

The speciality in town is of course seafood, and there are many choices as to where to eat it.

Sea Pearl (mains Rs 60-220; 🕒 8.30am-2pm & 6-11pm) Comes to life at night with a stream of customers, and fairy lights that make the seafood meals all the more appealing.

If you can't choose from among the range of seafood dishes, you can never go wrong with cultural staples such as fish curry with Goan rice (Rs 35), or a beef steak with chips and vegetables (Rs 75). The latter makes a fair stab at satiating cravings for food from home. Vegetarians are better off heading elsewhere.

Sagar Kinara (☎ 2780479; mains Rs 20-60) A real gem that has resisted the urge to adapt its menu and prices to tourists, this is a pure vegetarian restaurant with a fantastic array of North and South Indian delights.

Delhi Express (Colva Beach Rd; mains Rs 25-80) A good choice for some proactively tasty food. It's a low-key but well-run place with authentic food and a great range of sweets. You are unlikely to try a spicier or more tasty *dal tarka* (lentils flavoured with garlic, chillies, onions, cumin seeds, mustard seeds, ginger and tomatoes) anywhere else; the menu warns of the extra hot selections.

There are some well-established beach shacks within easy distance of the end of the road. The menu and service at all of them is relatively high given their enthusiasm to win your loyalty:

Domnick's (Colva Beach; mains Rs 40-180) Has a strong menu; the set Indian breakfast is good value at Rs 50.

Sea, Sun & Sand (Colva Beach; mains Rs 40-180) Next to Domnick's, this place has an equally eclectic menu and very friendly staff. A cup of coffee and a chocolate pancake goes down a treat.

Papillon (☎ 2789257; mains Rs 40-200) Further south, this is a fairly popular beach shack, perhaps because it isn't surrounded by a fleet of others. An appropriate meal for the Indian seaside is the seafood biryani (Rs 75). A vegetable stuffed naan (Rs 25) is an excellent postswim snack. And for dessert, or perhaps breakfast, if you're really in holiday mode, a rum pancake (Rs 30).

Drinking & Entertainment

In short, entertainment in Colva demands a do-it-yourself approach.

Gatsby's (☎ 2789745; man/woman Rs 250/free) If you need more action than the beach affords, head to this 24-hour coffee shop, pub and disco. The action usually lasts between 9pm and 3am. The majority of its clientele are men.

Boomerang (Downunder; 🕒 till late) This social bar has a fully-fledged circular bar and chairs spilling onto the sand towards the volleyball net. There's also a pool table that is perpetually monopolised by European

men in Speedos. It's a nice place to laze about and meet a few people (not all of whom, thankfully, wear Speedos).

Shalom (Vista de Colva; 🕒 till late) If you're in a sophisticated mood, head for Shalom, which makes a concerted effort to resist the laissez-faire approach of its neighbouring watering holes and maintains a lounge-bar feel; a far cry from the tragically Western-themed 'stud bar' it used to be.

Longinhos Beach Resort (☎ 2788068) The restaurant here has live music (and dancing when it can extract the requisite enthusiasm from its audience) from around 6pm. Head here if you're up for an engaging evening of rock renditions of the hokey-pokey.

Getting There & Away

Buses run from Colva to Margao about every half-hour (Rs 7, 20 minutes), departing from the roundabout in front of the GTDC Colva Residency. The first bus from Colva departs around 7.30am and the last returns from Margao about 7pm.

Taxis, share taxis, autorickshaws and motorcycles can also be picked up here. A taxi from Colva to Margao costs from Rs 80 to 100, and a motorcycle about Rs 40.

Getting Around

Motorcycles and mopeds are available for hire from Rs 100 to 350 a day. The best place to ask initially is your hotel, but also try the market area near the beach. A small stall opposite Colva Beach Resort rents bicycles for Rs 40 to 80 a day.

BEAULIM

☎ 0832

Only 2km south of Colva, Benaulim seems a world away – though development is beginning to make a faint imprint, it's much more peaceful and rural, the beach is cleaner and tourist facilities are few and far between. It's this rustic atmosphere that makes Benaulim a popular place for long-term visitors.

Benaulim has a special place in Goan tradition, for it is said to have been here that Parasurama's arrow landed when he fired it into the sea and created Goa.

Orientation & Information

There are a couple of reliable travel agents in Benaulim that can arrange air, bus and train tickets, and change money.

Bank of Baroda ATM (Vasvaddo Beach Rd) Near Maria Hall.

GK Tourist Centre (☎ 2770476, 2771221, 2770471; gktouristcentre@hotmail.com; H No 1592/2 Vasvaddo Beach Rd) Recommended.

Travels Etcetera (New Horizons; ☎ 2770635, 2771218; newhorizonsgoa@sancharnet.in; No 1595 Beach Rd) Very professionally run.

Sights & Activities

On the main road through the village, about 600m south of Maria Hall, **Manthan** (☎ 2271659) is a beautifully restored century-old Portuguese-era home that has been converted into a heritage gallery stuffed with art, sculptures, antiques and designer clothes. Almost everything is for sale, but even if you don't want to buy pricey contemporary Goan art, Manthan is a labour of love worth visiting.

Yoga classes (Rs 100) are held every Tuesday at 5pm at Pedro's Bar & Restaurant (p186) near the beach.

Water sports in Benaulim are not as prevalent as they are at more crowded Colva, though some operators hang around the beach shacks. One of the most prolific is **Lucky Remy's Watersports** (☎ 9850458489). Another is **Pele's Water Sport** (☎ 9822080045); jet skis cost Rs 500, and speed boats Rs 500.

Pedro's is a good place to ask about dolphin trips (Rs 250) and excursions to Anjuna (Rs 250), though the latter is cheaper to arrange from Colva.

Sleeping BUDGET

Oshin (☎ 2770069; inaciooshin@rediffmail.com; r Rs 475) An impressive budget choice, Oshin is quite a pleasant building that looks slightly out of place in a pleasant green part of Benaulim. Rooms all have bathroom and balconies.

Cocohuts (☎ 9372170572; huts with/without bathroom Rs 500/300) Budget accommodation at a top-end location; the huts here are more solid than many with concrete floors and proper beds. The grounds could certainly be cleaner and tidier, but Wilma, its manager, couldn't be any friendlier.

Simon Cottages (☎ 2770581; r Rs 200-300) Simon Cottages (where cottage actually means room in a building) is not near the beach but creates a very distinct atmosphere. Rooms have bathrooms, some even have fridges.

The quirky management is harmlessly intrusive, but these economical rooms, with pleasant shared balconies and in Benaulim's leafy heart, are worth the occasional imposition.

O'Palmar Beach Cottages (☎ 2770631; opalmar@sancharnet.in; r Rs 350) Rooms are extremely large with a separate sitting room from the bedroom, which is a bit useless given how dark it is, but the space is a rarity. Despite the lack of natural light, the location is great for this price.

Hotel Failaka (☎ 771270; hotelfailaka@hotmail.com; Adsulim Nagar, Benaulim; r Rs 400) Failaka is fair walk from the beach (near Maria Hall), but great value if you have wheels. Rooms are nicely furnished and have hot water, TV and balconies. It's a chunky red-and-white concrete building brightened by its happy colours and balconies.

Rosario's Inn (☎ 2770636; Benaulim Beach Rd; r with/without bathroom Rs 300/150) Almost on the football pitch, Rosario's is a large establishment that's great value and has a committed traveller vibe. Rooms open onto a balcony.

Libra (☎ 2770598; r Rs 300) There are plenty of basic family-run places on the main roads such as this one, which has basic rooms in a family-run establishment. Keep an eye out for signs for similar options.

D'Souza's Guest House (☎ 2770583; r Rs 400) This place is popular (often full) for its clean rooms in a proud blue building.

There are a few no-fuss options around the main strip:

Jacinta Moraes Guest House (☎ 2770187; H No 1608, Benaulim Beach Rd; r Rs 200) Clean and basic rooms behind the main house of the friendly family.

Tansy Cottages (☎ 2770547; tansytouristcottages@yahoo.co.in; r Rs 300) Has nine rooms, all with bathroom.

MIDRANGE

Palm Grove Cottages (☎ 2770059, 2771170, 2770411; www.palmgrovegoa.com; r Rs 400-1150) A praise-worthy option that has a range of rooms throughout a dense green garden. Rooms range from simple but spacious accommodation behind the main house, to separately situated newer rooms. The place gets rave reviews, and people enjoy the quality restaurant. There's a security guard posted at the gate and the whole place is pleasantly secluded.

L'Amour Beach Resort (☎ 2770404, 2770562; www.lamourbeachresort.com; cottages Rs 600) A great

location with well-kept grounds and smartly uniformed staff. The cottage-style rooms are a bit tired but there's nothing wrong with them. The resort is attached to the pleasant Sea Rose Restaurant.

Anthy's Guesthouse (☎ 2771680; anthysguesthouse@rediffmail.com; r Rs 1300) A fantastic choice, albeit slightly overpriced for rooms with no air-con or hot water, but it is well maintained and has real character. The staff are happy, the guests are happy, the food is great. Stay here if you can.

Furtado's (☎ 2770396; r with/without AC Rs 1200/800; 🍴) The food gets quite good reviews and the location couldn't be better, but we have had some very serious complaints about management here and Furtado's right to a recommendation is in serious doubt.

TOP END

Carina Beach Resort (☎ 2770413, 2770414; bookings@carinabeachresort.com; s/d Rs 1300/1800, d with AC Rs 2000; 🍴 🚿) About the closest thing to a top-end hotel in Benaulim. You could stay on the beach for the price you pay, but the resort has its own swimming pool and large grounds for lounging about in relative privacy.

Taj Exotica (☎ 2771234; www.tajhotels.com; Calwaddo, Benaulim; r Rs 28,600-45,500; 🍴) A pleasant drive from Benaulim, the 140-room Taj Exotica is a famous place to stay in these parts. Prices here make other top-end hotels look like budget accommodation. Well done if you can afford to stay; you're in for sheer indulgence.

Eating

Johncy's (☎ 2771390; mains Rs 50-130) Johncy's has been a popular place to meet and socialise for the last couple of decades. There is a mixed menu of Indian, Chinese, and Goan.

Pedro's Bar & Restaurant (mains Rs 60-120; 🍷 8am-midnight) This is a popular place to eat, largely because of its location. The extensive menu offers everything from traditional Goan dishes to sizzlers. There's also live music on Tuesday night.

Malibu Restaurant (Calwaddo, Benaulim; mains Rs 40-130) This very pleasant restaurant is a lovely place for al fresco dining in a very green eating area. It's a popular choice for breakfast.

Palm Garden Restaurant (☎ 2770059; mains Rs 60-140) A spotlessly clean and sometimes pleasantly sociable restaurant set in a gazebo-shaped building in the secluded gardens of Palm Grove Cottages.

Taj Exotica (☎ 2771234; mains from Rs 300) If you are interested in some fine upmarket dining, the restaurants at Taj Exotica are the best in the area.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Margao from Benaulim (Rs 4) are frequent, and leave from the bus stand at Maria Hall. Buses heading south to Varca and Cavellossim can be picked up at the crossroads. Minibus taxis tend to hang around opposite the Royal Goan Beach Club, while motorcycle taxis and autorickshaws hang around the crossroads.

Getting Around

Benaulim village is quite spread out and a lot of accommodation is well back from the beach, so it pays to have some form of transport. There are plenty of places in Benaulim that rent motorcycles – ask at guesthouses or at the car park on the beach.

Bicycles are available for rent in front of Pedro's or outside Furtado's on Sernabatim Beach for around Rs 40 to 80 a day. At low tide you can ride 15km along the beach to Mobor, at the southern end, then back along the road through Cavellossim and Varca.

VARCA, CAVELOSSIM & MOBOR

☎ 0832

The 10km strip of pristine beach south of Benaulim has become Goa's most upmarket resort frontage. The five-star resorts are exclusive, luxurious self-contained bubbles with pools, extensive private grounds (some have golf courses) and cavernous marble lobbies.

Thankfully, it's still possible to enjoy this relatively deserted stretch of coastline without spending a small fortune on accommodation. With your own transport you can find one of several beach access points in between the big hotels; there's generally a few beach shacks and sun beds at the end of these lanes catering to the few independent tourists who come here. Public buses run from Margao and Colva to Varca and Cavellossim villages, but you can't get right

to the beach by public transport. A good spot to access the beach in Varca is just south of the Goa Renaissance Resort in a small area called Zalor. From here you can wander north or south and find a deserted bit of sand.

Cavellossim, 7km south of Varca, is an incongruous strip of shops and hotels. Both Varca and Cavellossim villages have impressive whitewashed churches that are worth a stop if you're exploring this region under your own steam. The ride along the back roads from Benaulim to Cavellossim takes you through coconut groves, farmland, paddy fields and small settlements.

Continuing on through Cavellossim brings you to Mobor on the tip of the peninsula, where the Sal River meets the Arabian Sea. **Boat trips** on the Sal River can be organised here.

Tours

There are numerous tour operators now advertising along the main road, which are healthily competitive. Ask around for something that suits. Alternatively, **Betty's Place** (☎ 2871456) runs leisurely cruises and activities such as river bird-watching (Rs 250), one-hour dolphin-spotting cruises (Rs 300) and fishing trips (Rs 500, extra if you want your catch to be cooked and served to you) and two-hour evening bird-watching trips (Rs 250). Betty's Place also arranges a variety of water sports.

Sleeping & Eating

VARCA

Radisson White Sands Resort (☎ 2727272; www.radisson.com; Pedda, Varca-Salcete; d Rs 9000-28,000; 🍴) On the beach about 2km west of Varca village, Radisson is a five-star resort hotel with all the trimmings. The cavernous pool with an artificial waterfall is a particularly decadent feature.

Club Mahindra (☎ 2744555; www.clubmahindra.com; Survery No 176/1, Varca Village, Salcete; d Rs 5000, studios Rs 6000, ste Rs 7000; 🍴) Also facing Varca Beach, this is a reasonable choice, outside the peak season, for affordable luxury. It's a family-friendly place with plenty to keep kids occupied, a terraced pool, three restaurants and 135 rooms. It's also a favourite among Russian package tourists. There are packages available, which include meals and some sightseeing trips.

Ramada (☎ 2745200; www.ramadahotels.com; d Rs 6600; 🏠) The enormous lobby of this 202-room resort, formerly Goa Renaissance Resort, is adorned with towering archways beyond which manicured gardens stretch to the beach, a big pool, tennis courts, a golf course, nightclubs and a casino designed by the same people that created Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. All rooms have a balcony facing the gardens or the sea.

Michette's (☎ 2745732; michetteholidaycare@rediffmail.com; d & apt Rs 500) A family-run place just south of the crossroads to the beach. It has a good-value two-bedroom apartment with two balconies and a sitting room that would be ideal for a family or group, and some smaller doubles nearby. The inexpensive restaurant turns out authentic food.

Dona Sa Maria Holiday Home (☎ 2745290; www.donasamaria.com; d Rs 1000; 🏠) Further south on the same road is this pleasant midrange hotel with a small pool, bar and restaurant. The family that runs it are very friendly, and the rooms are all well decked out with very pleasant balconies. A good place, if you want peace and quiet.

CAVELOSSIM & MOBOR

As well as the restaurants and bars at the flash hotels there are several good eating and drinking places in this area, though menu prices generally reflect the upmarket nature of the tourism.

Leela (☎ 2871234; www.ghmhotels.com; pavilion r US\$320, ste US\$495-2200; 🏠) With 152 rooms on 75 acres of luxury, this enormous expanse of manicured Goan perfection has its own riverside Italian restaurant, a 12-hole golf course, and various rooms of varying degrees of decadence. The villas are particularly pleasant, overhanging the artificial lagoon and complete with their own plunge pool (one of which is left vacant for a chairman, but still cleaned daily even in his absence). Leisure facilities include tennis and squash courts, a gym, a pool and health spa, a casino, plus a full range of water sports. The expanse of beach exclusively available to guests is particularly good, with palm trees providing much-needed shade, and the elegant road built for buggies to transport guests even extends to this private beach.

Gaffino's Beach Resort (☎ 2871441; briangaffino@gmail.com; d with/without AC 1500/1200; 🏠) This

popular, though slightly overpriced, guest-house has an excellent restaurant, which caters to a variety of tastes and makes a genuine stab at the authenticity of its Western dishes.

Dona Sylvia (☎ 2871321; www.donasylvia.com; d with AC Rs 8500; 🏠) Dona Sylvia operates 'all-inclusive' package deals (including three meals a day and booze between 11am and 11pm), or slightly cheaper accommodation-and-meals packages. If all you want to do is laze around the pool, eat, drink and party, it may be for you.

Sao Domingo's Holiday Home (☎ 2871461; www.saodomingosgoa.com; d with/without AC Rs 1600/1200; 🏠) Down a laneway opposite Goan Village, this midrange hotel is in a pleasant area of coconut palms just a few minutes' walk from the River Sal. Tidy rooms have balconies and hot water, and some have air-con.

Holiday Inn Resort (☎ 2871303; www.holidayinn.goa.com; s US\$140-165, d US\$140-225; 🏠) Smaller than some of the resorts in this part of Goa but still impressive with rooms arranged around a pool just back from the beach. It has a few distinct restaurants and facilities catering for young kids.

Goan Village (☎ 2871629; saodomingos@rediffmail.com; mains Rs 60-200) Opposite Sao Domingo's, Goan Village is a garden restaurant with live music on Saturday and Tuesday, and beach parties on Wednesday. It has a menu of Goan cuisine backed by Indian and continental staples. Recommended is pomfret *recheiada* (stuffed with red masala filling, Rs 180).

Mike's Place (☎ 2871248; www.mikesplacegoa.com) A popular place for evening meals and drinks, Mike's Place arranges live-music nights in its polished outdoor setting and beach parties every Wednesday. There are also some rooms here.

Entertainment

Goan Village (☎ 2871629; saodomingos@rediffmail.com) Goan Village has live music on Saturday and Tuesday. It also arranges beach parties on Wednesday nights, where customers all move to the beach and can be served their food there.

Jazz Inn (jazzinn_2000@yahoo.com) Near Gaffino's on the main road to Mobor is this popular night-time spot with live music, which is sometimes not so much jazz as reggae.

BETUL TO AGONDA

To the south of Mobor is the mouth of the Sal River. To continue down the coast you either need to backtrack and head inland via Chinchinim for the National Highway (NH) 17 or take the small road leading east from Cavelossim, cross by ferry to Assolna, and then continue down the coast road.

This coast road is the most interesting way to explore southern Goa, if you have your own transport – preferably a motorcycle. The area south of Betul is one of the few parts of the Goan coast where the Western Ghats project westwards far enough to form imposing headlands. The coastal road is hilly, winding and in many places poorly surfaced, but it's quiet, scenic and good for a spot of motorcycle touring. Another reason to take the coast road is that you can detour to the old fort, or what remains of it, at Cabo da Rama.

The ferry from Cavelossim to Assolna theoretically runs every half-hour between 6.15am and 8.30pm, and between 6.30am and 8.45pm coming back the other way. In practice though it continually goes back and forth so there's very little waiting time. The journey takes four minutes. To get to the ferry crossing, turn left at the timetable just near the church, and continue for 2km to the river. On the other side, turn left towards Assolna then take a right in the village to head south to Betul, passing through the town of Velim.

Betul

☎ 0832

Following the coast southwards from the Sal River, opposite the narrow peninsula occupied by the Leela Palace resort is the ramshackle fishing village of Betul. Few foreign tourists stay here and, apart from getting local boatmen to take you out on the river or watching the fishermen unload their catch at the harbour, there's not much to do, but it's very peaceful and a good taste of rural Goa.

Off the main road on the banks of the estuary, **Betul Beach Resort** (☎ 2774923; betulbeachresort@yahoo.co.in; Plot No 1, Rangali, Velim, Salcete; betulbeachresort@sancharnet.in; d with AC Rs 1000-1600; 🏠) is a reasonable, albeit overpriced, choice if you're staying in the area. There are 32 plain rooms and cottages in a garden setting, a decent sort of pool

and a very basic restaurant. At high tide you can take boat trips on the river from here and cross to the adjacent beach.

Cabo da Rama

The laterite spurs along the coastline of Goa, providing both high ground and ready-made supplies of building stone, were also natural sites for fortresses. These were used along the length of Goa's coastline – Mormugao, Aguada, Chapora and Terekhol. The headland of Cabo da Rama is no exception and there was a fortress here long before the Portuguese ever reached Goa.

The **fortress** on this site, named after Rama of the Hindu Ramayana epic who was said to have spent time in exile here with his wife Sita, was held by various rulers for many years. It was not until 1763 that it was gained by the Portuguese from the Raja of Sonda and was subsequently rebuilt; what remains today, including the rusty cannons, is entirely Portuguese.

Although the fort saw no real action after the rebuild, it was briefly occupied by British troops between 1797 and 1802 and again between 1803 and 1813, before being allowed to fall into ruin. It was used as a prison for a period until 1955.

There is little to see of the old structure beyond the front wall with its dry moat and unimposing main gate, and the small church that stands just inside the walls, but the views north and south are worth coming for. Services are still held in the chapel every Sunday.

To get to the fort from the coast road between Betul and Agonda, turn west at the signposted turn-off about 10km south of Betul. The road dips into a lush valley then winds steeply up to a barren plateau punctuated by farmhouses and wandering stock. The fort is at the end of this road, about 3km from the turn-off.

There are local buses direct from Margao or Betul several times daily but since there's nothing to do once you've explored the fort you should check on times for returning buses. There are a couple of simple cafés and drink stalls outside the fort entrance to while away some time while waiting for a bus, but nowhere to stay the night.

A return taxi to Cabo da Rama costs around Rs 300 from Betul and Rs 500 from Palem, including waiting time.

Agonda

☎ 0832

Twelve kilometres south of the turn-off to Cabo da Rama (and 8km north of Palolem), the coast road passes the small village of Agonda. Following the small road 2km to the coast you eventually come to a T-junction just behind the beach itself. There are a few places to stay along the road in either direction, though turning right at the junction takes you to the most beautiful (and unspoilt) part of Agonda Beach.

Agonda Beach is an almost completely untouched 2km stretch of white sand. It's a great place to chill out if you're feeling mellow and have a stack of good books, but don't come here if you like to spend your afternoons playing beach volleyball and boozing in the beach shacks – with the exception of a couple of restaurants attached to guesthouses, there are none. Almost every guesthouse can arrange a taxi or a dolphin trip and can help you source a bicycle.

On the road between Agonda and Palolem, near a small drink stall, look for a sign pointing to **Butterfly Beach**. A narrow path leads over a headland to this tiny secluded beach, accessible only by boat or this path. It's a stiff one-hour walk with a steep ascent then descent to the beach, so allow plenty of time to get there and back. Boat trips from Palolem also go out to Butterfly Beach so you may not be entirely alone.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are several guesthouses in Agonda, and, much to the displeasure of many, there are more on the way.

Forget Me Not (☎ 2647611; mahahotl@goatelecom.com; huts Rs 400-1000, r from Rs 700) Forget Me Not espouses the laid-back Goan *susegad* philosophy, with a side order of serious beach appreciation. Amid the cocohuts and mud-brick rooms are chill-out areas, hanging chairs and a manager who makes a concerted effort to ensure that guests respect his right to enjoy his patch of paradise. Forget Me Not is at the north end of Agonda, at one of those special beaches that precariously endures the challenge of remaining unspoilt.

Palm Beach Lifestyle Resort (☎ 2647783; www.palmbeachgoa.com; d Rs 900) The most upmarket in appearance, Palm Beach Lifestyle Resort

is a collection of rooms that are built up a hill – the one at the very back is the highest, and nice if you can get it. The manager prides himself on not having moved a tree or stone in the construction of the resort, and indeed some balconies have been built around palm trees and the rooms are scattered almost haphazardly around the area. The buildings are mixed mud and concrete of a pleasant red earthy colour.

Dunhill Resort (☎ 2647328; d Rs 400) This place was one of the first to cotton on to the tourist potential of Agonda with its 13 well-maintained cottage-style rooms, all with bathroom and a restaurant with an amicable air. The friendly family that runs this place is giving in to the trend with plans to build cocohuts at the beach in the near future.

Abba's Glory Land (☎ 2647822; Dovel Kazan, Agonda Beach; huts & r Rs 400) On the main road behind the beach, Abba's is relatively new and very good value. There are clean but adequately sized huts with bathrooms. Even better are the four rooms that have sensible wardrobes, which you can secure with your own padlock.

Maria Paulo (☎ 2647606; d with/without balcony Rs 500/400) Just left of the church at the T-junction is a very pleasant guesthouse at a friendly family home. Rooms are exceptionally clean and airy with unusually large windows. There is also a nice common balcony that guests can enjoy. Look for the small painted sign that reads 'well furnished guest rooms'.

Mahnamahnas (☎ 2647846; the.mahnamahnas@gmail.com) At the time of research, these hard to miss blue-and-white wooden-board cottages were in the process of being completed (much to the chagrin of locals). They're different from the competition in that there is a bathroom downstairs and a bedroom upstairs, with an enormous balcony with hammock. The space would suit a family.

Sunset Bar (☎ 2647381) Perched up on a hill at the southern end of the beach, it has a great outlook and a small open-air restaurant – a great place to watch the sun sink into the Arabian Sea. There are also some rooms here.

Turtle Lounge (☎ 9423813150; mains Rs 75-325; ☎ 8am-late) A great place for a drink at any time, the recently opened Turtle Lounge

has a boutique charisma that doesn't seem to quite fit Agonda. The wooden four-poster canopied beds on the sand make the perfect base for a day at the beach, particularly given luxurious private open-air showers. The shaded tables are resplendently candlelit at night.

Other good choices off the beach:

Denyson's (☎ 2647242; r Rs 250) Respectable rooms at a family house on the road as it starts to climb.

Defny's (r Rs 300) Two simple but adequate rooms managed by the same people who run Denyson's, but on the road across from the beach.

Dersy Beach Resort (☎ 2647503; huts Rs 200, r with bathroom Rs 500) Five spotless doubles across the road from the beach and 11 simple palm-thatch huts on the beach side. There is also a pleasant shaded restaurant.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

As with any out-of-the-way place, reaching Agonda is best with your own transport – you can cycle here from Palolem in about an hour. A taxi from Palolem or Chaudi costs about Rs 150 and an autorickshaw Rs 90. Local buses run to Agonda from Chaudi sporadically throughout the day (Rs 5), stopping at the T-junction near the church. If you're coming from Palolem you can wait at the junction of the main highway (NH17) and the Agonda road and flag down a passing bus. Coming from Margao, there are a few direct buses, or you can go to Chaudi and get another bus from there.

PALOLEM

☎ 0832

Opinions flow fast and firm when it comes to Palolem. The older fraternity of the travel community has tied itself into tantric knots over 'the way it has changed'. They lament its metamorphosis from deserted paradise into a 'bamboo Calangute', while others (who obviously aren't familiar with 'the way it was', say the cynics) think it's the best beach in Goa.

Whatever Palolem was a decade ago, it's best appreciated as it is – a postcard-perfect crescent of white sand fringed by a shady rim of coconut palms and cocohuts. Palolem's mix of lazy beach life, large nomadic population, and down-to-earth nightlife is an affably hospitable mix. And it's hard to criticise the influx of backpackers to Palolem when you're sharing a beer or game of volleyball with them.

Information

The lane leading from the end of the road (where buses stop) to the main beach entrance is lined with stalls selling all the usual handicrafts, souvenirs and clothing.

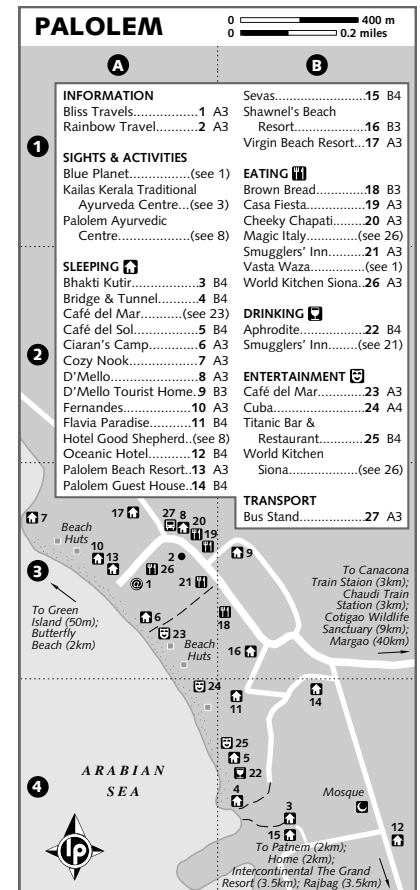
There are plenty of places to access the Internet in Palolem, including a 24-hour Internet café right on the beach next to Cuba. International phone calls can be made at most Internet places.

Bliss Travels (☎ 2643456; blisstravels@rediffmail.com) Near the main entrance to the beach. Bus and flight bookings, currency exchange and Internet access (Rs 50 per hour).

Post office In Chaudi, 4km to the east of Palolem.

Rainbow Travel (☎ 2643912; sitaben@hotmail.com)

Reliable travel agent on the main road in the village.



Activities

Travellers coming to Palolem are generally looking to relax on the beach, but there's plenty to do. The sea is excellent for swimming and you can rent boogie boards and even surfboards from stalls near the main entrance to the beach.

There is also an adventure-sport base; local operators are starting to dabble in canyoning trips and trekking. Ask around and keep an eye peeled for signs.

There are various Ayurvedic treatments available. The **Palolem Ayurvedic Centre** (☎ 226 40193; palolemayurvedicentre@yahoo.co.in), behind Hotel Good Shepherd, has been recommended. A general massage (from a male or female masseur) will cost Rs 500 (one hour), and there are various other treatments on offer.

Yoga, massage and meditation courses are advertised at restaurants. Check the notice board outside Brown Bread café, which has information on meditation, astrology, holistic healing, tarot and various courses. Bhakti Kutir (opposite), near Colomb Bay, runs workshops in yoga, meditation and natural healing; it also has the **Kailas Kerala Traditional Ayurveda Centre** (☎ 264372; www.bhaktikutir.com; 296 Palolem, Patnem).

Blue Planet (☎ 9850456228; www.doctor-of-the-future.com; ☎ 9am-5pm) is an internationally run natural-healing centre that prides itself on being able to offer almost any type of massage you can think of for Rs 500 per hour. Booking ahead is advised. There are also morning yoga classes.

Tours

Boat tours to see dolphins or to visit tiny Butterfly Beach are easy to arrange – it seems just about everyone in Palolem owns a fishing boat or knows someone who does. A one-hour trip costs around Rs 150 per person and you can organise this through your accommodation or just wander along the beach and ask around. Most trips leave in the morning (around 8am) or early evening. Every now and then, after an accident, trips will cease for a couple of days.

Sleeping

Cozy Nook (☎ 2643550; small huts without bathroom Rs 500, large cottages with bathroom Rs 1500) Cozy Nook is a hippy nouveau Palolem institution. Balconies, eating areas and the interior of some

huts have been created using concrete shapes and rocks to remove dull corners and straight walls, and add colour and shape. Walls that aren't already vibrantly tiled are covered with interesting wall hangings. Other assets of Cozy Nook are its restaurant and its location between a lake and an ocean.

Sevas (☎ 2643977; www.sevaspalolemgoa.com) Sevas is a good runner-up to its neighbour, Bhakti Kutir. Gardens here have not grown to the same extent as Bhakti's and rooms are less memorable, but the grounds are very well kept, the rooms are more economical, and the staff aren't as apathetic. There is also a holistic healing ethos at work here; yoga and massage are available.

Oceanic Hotel (☎ 2643059; www.hotel-oceanic.com; Tembiwaddo; r Rs 1500-2500; ♿) This delightful white building is set off the beach on the road between Palolem and Patnem. It is a lovely space that has a more private feel than many other options in Palolem, and boasts the only swimming pool around (which outsiders can use for Rs 200).

Ciaran's Camp (☎ 2643477; johnciaran@hotmail.com; r Rs 1000-2000) Ciaran's has worked hard to keep its distinction over the years. Rooms aren't cheap but they are lovely, set around a pretty garden, and all with their own veranda area. There is lovely attention to detail here; guests can enjoy chai at 4.30pm every day. There is also an inviting restaurant that churns out barbecued seafood on candlelit tables under white umbrellas.

Palolem Guest House (☎ 2644880; palolemguesthouse@hotmail.com; r Rs 1400-2000, huts Rs 400; ♿) Popular with the slightly older crowd who aren't into late-night music and have done their fair share of budget hotels, Palolem Guest House offers spacious rooms that are well-equipped with everything that you could need (including TV, air-con and hot water) and a cosy restaurant. There are two cheap and basic huts on the premises.

Bridge & Tunnel (☎ 9326100699; shoumirsh@rediffmail.com; huts Rs 900-2500) Some of the huts here are not the best value in town, but Bridge & Tunnel is beyond reproach in light of its location right on the headland of rocks. Climb up one side of the rocks and down the other to get to your hut and your own private little stretch of sand. The huts are pleasantly spaced away from each other.

Shawnel's Beach Resort (☎ 2643912, 2644745; sitaben@hotmail.com; huts Rs 500-1200) Shawnel's is

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Bhakti Kutir (☎ 2643472; www.bhaktikutir.com; 296 Palolem, Patnem; r Rs 1500) A commendable project of a Goan and his German wife, Bhakti Kutir is an ecologically sensitive and atmospherically sublime place to stay.

The 22 cottage-style rooms are all unique and boast extraordinary attention to detail: Goan style red-tiled roofs, lampshades made of coconuts and luxuriant mosquito nets set the tone. Sometimes there are curtains where walls should be, and many bathrooms are open air, allowing you to bathe between bamboo trees under the sun or stars. Cushions and hammocks are strung up inside and outside the cottages, some of which have private curtained-off areas in the coconut grove, others have sofas or rocking chairs on the balcony.

Rooms are connected by stone pathways, above which nets are strung like spider webs to catch lazy leaves that gather like great pastel-coloured clouds. As well as yoga, an Ayurveda centre, and a school for guests' children, Bhakti Kutir has an outdoor organic restaurant, where the parachute roofs heave in the wind like deep-breathing lungs.

not so much a 'beach resort' as six huts that are sort of near the beach. They are enormously good value if you're not fussed about the two-minute walk. Huts are solidly built with wooden walls, and have concrete floors and proper beds, as well as tiled bathrooms. They are commendably spacious and aren't within conversational distance of your neighbour. Contact Rainbow Travel (p191) for more information.

Palolem Beach Resort (☎ 2643054; www.goainns.com/palolembeachresort; tents with/without bathroom Rs 450/350, r with/without AC Rs 700/1200; ♿) Surprisingly well-priced for so professionally run an establishment, Palolem Beach Resort has tents and rooms set around a pleasant grassed area. Basic tents are set up on solid concrete grounds, and have twin beds and a fan; the shared bathroom is clean. There are also rooms that are good value for their location and compared to their neighbours. It's a pleasant place for families to stay with the small playground in the middle of the well-kept and friendly grounds.

Hotel Good Shepherd (☎ 2643814; s with/without bathroom Rs 200/150, d with bathroom Rs 350) Hotel Good Shepherd is a central but well-priced budget hotel. There is a common balcony area, and the restaurant downstairs is a good night-time hangout. This is an economic option for solo travellers who don't want to pay for a whole cocohut; there are a couple of clean single rooms with a bed, desk and shared or private bathroom.

D'Mello (☎ 643057, 643439; r Rs 800) A good budget choice away from the beach, this a well-priced hotel on the main road. If you're after a clean and basic hotel, this is

it. Rooms have a balcony, some even with a vaguely interesting view (of the street, not the beach). The floors are clean white tile.

D'Mello Tourist Home (d Rs 300-400, without bathroom Rs 250) The same pleasant couple who have recently built D'Mello also run this more budget place at their family home; rooms here are not as new but are clean and comfortable, some with balconies.

Virgin Beach Resort (☎ 2643451; d from Rs 600) Another good choice if you want a hotel as opposed to a hut. It's nothing flash at all, but rooms are a comfortable size and we've had good reports about it.

Café del Sol (☎ 9823313981; kennedys@sancharnet.in; huts up to 6 people Rs 1000-3400) and **Café del Mar** (huts Rs 950-1400) are built and managed by the same people, and have similarly distinctive huts. The difference between them is that Café del Sol is a lot quieter, whereas Café del Mar has a 24-hour bar; the music is turned down at midnight but never actually stops. Other than the noise, it's a lovely sociable and comfortable place to stay, with stylish and well-facilitated huts.

Among the myriad cocohut choices along the beach:

Fernandes (☎ 2643743; huts Rs 1000-1400) Pleasant though somewhat overpriced spacious wooden huts with raised balconies. The restaurant also gets good reviews.

Flavia Paradise (☎ 2643676; r without bathroom Rs 200, beachfront r Rs 500) Good value considering its location; the pleasant verandas and balconies are quite close together. It can be a sociable place.

Eating

It's worth leaving the beach to go and explore the restaurant range in Palolem.

World Kitchen Siona (mains Rs 60-180; ☎ 8.30am-late) World Kitchen Siona is a multicuisine restaurant, which has an impressive range of Italian, Chinese, Indian and Israeli food. The atmosphere is comfortable and some of its pasta dishes could rival its Italian competition (try the Spicy Bella). World Kitchen Siona often wins the closing time standoff with its neighbours, and manages to stay open the longest. Staff are unfailingly friendly and there's occasionally live music.

Cheeky Chapati (mains Rs 40-150) This endearingly named English-run establishment is recommended. The atmosphere is laid back but proud, and a lot of effort goes into the vegetarian and seafood menu. The sandwiches and wraps are chunky and its pastas are popular. If you're feeling like a hearty Italian meal that pays homage to the beach, try the mixed seafood penne (Rs 150), which varies depending on the seafood that's floating around on any given day but is always delicious. The blue-cheese and spinach pizza (Rs 130) is fresh and zesty.

Magik Italy (mains Rs 160-200; ☎ 6.30-11pm) A place popular for its splendid atmosphere and fresh Italian food. Ingredients are imported from Italy, and pizzas and pastas are made fresh.

Vasta Waza (☎ 9850925668; mains Rs 40-130) Something new and a little bit different, this tiny Kashmiri restaurant, next to Bliss Travel, serves Middle Eastern fare in an overtly Middle Eastern environment. There's even free delivery...within a 1km radius.

Brown Bread (☎ 2643604; Palolem Rd; mains Rs 40-120) The ideal breakfast venue with a healthy menu of fresh breads from the bakery, fruit shakes and real coffee.

Smuggler's Inn (☎ 9822381303; smugglers_goa@yahoo.co.in) A recommended English pub-restaurant, the Smuggler's Inn has a pool table, good atmosphere and, out the back, a surprisingly authentic bar, which may even remind you of your own local. There's traditional English fare and a breakfast buffet (hot/cold Rs 250/150).

Casa Fiesta (mains Rs 50-140) Mexican food and miscellaneous other dishes (like pasta and seafood options) in a pleasantly lit garden. The Latin tunes add to the commendable attempt at making authentic Mexican burritos in a Goan beach town. The consistent crowds testify to Casa Fiesta's popularity.

Drinking & Entertainment

Titanic Bar & Restaurant (☎ till late) A leader on the beach in terms of entertainment. Sometimes the crowd just sits around and relaxes, but other times a live musician or band will turn the place into an unpretentious party.

Cuba (☎ 8.30am-2am) Also has organised drinks nights, with singles night on Tuesday and gay night on Wednesday.

Café del Mar (☎ 24hr) The music at this bar is loud until around midnight.

Smuggler's Inn (☎ 9822381303; smugglers_goa@yahoo.co.in) A popular place for a drink by the bar with whoever else is hanging around to enjoy the surprisingly successful effort of English authenticity in India.

Aphrodite (cocktails Rs 80-240) For more sophistication and beachside sipping, head here to one of the most classy beach shacks, with an extensive cocktail list.

Some of the restaurants along the roads, such as World Kitchen Siona (left), have live music nights and some restaurants cater for the quieter crowd by occasionally playing DVDs.

Getting There & Away

BUS
Ordinary buses leave from the Kadamba bus stand in Margao and drop you off in the very heart of Palolem (Rs 18, one hour).

Alternatively, if the bus stops at Chaudi, Palolem is only 3km away. An autorickshaw from here should cost around Rs 40. All Karwar-bound buses stop at Chaudi.

Private buses to Mumbai, Hampi, Bangalore and Mangalore can be booked at travel agents in Palolem and some will pick you up in the village (check with the agent).

TRAIN

Between the Char Rasta crossroads and Chaudi is Canacona train station, from where there are services north to Margao (Rs 10, 35 minutes) and other stations in Goa. The 5am *Netravati Express* goes direct to Mumbai's Lokmanya Tilak station, but it's more convenient to take a bus or train to Margao and an express train from there. Heading south the same train stops at Canacona at 11.06pm and goes to Kankanara (for Mangalore) and Ernakulam (for Kochi).

Private booking agents in Palolem can organise train tickets for you. A train to Mumbai costs around Rs 1500.

SOUTH OF PALOLEM

With beach huts and shacks spreading unstopably across the sands of Palolem Beach, it's hardly surprising that travellers are drifting south in search of peace and space. There is also an eclectic array of long-term visitors in this area, who have found themselves village houses to rent.

Colomb

☎ 0832

Around the headland from Palolem is a small, rocky bay called Colomb, where rustic restaurants and family guesthouses shelter in a peaceful clump of coconut trees. The rocky bay here is better suited to paddling than swimming, but the short walk to Palolem to the north and Patnem to the south makes this a good low-key choice.

The most predominant place to stay in Colomb, **Laguna Vista Resort** (☎ 2644457; lagooview5@yahoo.com; huts at front/rear Rs 1000/800, huts without bathroom Rs 500) has overpriced huts with bathrooms, and only a handful of standard cocohuts without bathrooms, but the area is secluded and the sunrise and sunset views over the bay are lovely.

Boom Shankar Restaurant (☎ 2644035; mains Rs 50-130; ☎ 8am-11pm) is as popular for its view over the bay as for its cuisine. The Indian, Goan, Chinese, Thai and Western food here is good value compared to that found in Palolem. There are also some rooms.

DETOUR: CYCLING AROUND PALOLEM

If you tire of the beach scene, there are some interesting cycling routes through the countryside around Palolem. The most obvious is down to the Talpona River mouth at **Rajbag Beach**, with a stop at **Patnem Beach** along the way.

Riding out of Palolem village (towards the highway), take the right turn at the small general store and head south, roughly parallel with the coast. The first right turn along here leads down to Colomb Bay. If you keep going straight for about 2km, you come to the turn-off to Patnem Beach. Back on the coast road, continue riding through paddy fields and the village of Kindlebag before reaching Rajbag and the Talpona River at the road's end. There are a couple of shacks here where you can get a drink and something to eat – and you can marvel at (or pour scorn on) the multi-million-dollar resort that's been built at this humble village.

Another possibility is to ride to **Agonda Beach**, around 8km from Palolem. Just before you reach the highway there's a sharp left-hand turn (signposted) for the winding and hilly road to Agonda (and on to Cabo da Rama and Betul). The left-hand turn off this road to Agonda Beach is not well marked but it comes before you start the steep hill climb – if your legs are getting tired you've probably gone too far. Agonda is a good antidote to Palolem and a relaxing place to spend the afternoon before riding back.

Gearless Indian bicycles can be hired in the market area at Palolem for around Rs 40 a day (Rs 80 in peak season).

Patnem

☎ 0832

A couple of kilometres south of Palolem is beautiful Patnem Beach, a small peaceful bay that runs into Kindlebag and Rajbag further south. Patnem has a strip of laid-back beach shacks; it's smaller than Palolem, but in recent years has begun to absorb some of its overflow. For the time being, though, this is a good place to escape the crowds – the sand is perfect and Patnem gets a bit of swell, which is ideal for boogie-boarding or windsurfing (you can rent boards in Palolem). It's also just small enough to have the more friendly feel of a place where nomads can meet. To find out what's going on in the way of yoga and massage, and other such essential Goan beach things, see the notice boards at the staircase leading from the main road onto the beach.

SLEEPING & EATING

Most of the beach shacks have basic accommodation in palm-thatch or bamboo huts for around Rs 200 to 600 a night. There are also a couple on the roads away from the beach that are worth considering.

Hotel Sea View (☎ 2643110; d Rs 250-800) A great-value guesthouse, about 200m back from the beach. The cheaper basic rooms in the old building have their own bathroom, though the newer building has cleaner, bigger doubles, with prices varying according

to size. Some rooms have fantastic balconies and windows. There is also an Internet café downstairs (Rs 40 per hour).

Home (☎ 2643916; homeispntem@yahoo.com; d Rs 500-800) A popular choice run by an English-Swiss team, with eight spotless and stylish rooms of varying sizes but all with bathrooms. If these are full (which they probably will be) the staff may be able to direct you to other choices. The Euro-style restaurant gets rave reviews and serves up superb pasta, fresh salads, pastries and real coffee from an espresso machine. It's not cheap (an Austrian apple strudel costs Rs 70) but the atmosphere is perfect and the quality of food is unquestionable.

Parvati Huts (☎ 9822189913; www.parvatihuts.in; huts Rs 1200, without bathroom Rs 400-600) A good choice that stands out from the flimsier huts around it; Parvati's huts are built of solid varnished bamboo, and mosquito nets and wall hangings add character to the round huts. There are also small but serviceable verandas attached to each.

Goyam (☎ 9890457375; www.goyam.net; huts at the beach Rs 3000, back from the beach Rs 1500, large family huts back from the beach Rs 2500) Classier (and pricier) than most, Goyam has wooden huts that it has jazzed up with details in a bid to justify the high price tag, such as a coat of bright paint, and balconies that are piled high with cushions and shaded with breezy curtains.

Nature's Green (☎ 09822185553; huts with/without fan Rs 250/200) If even Patnem Beach is too crowded for you, and you're in search of a quirky hideaway, head to the banks of the river. There are a handful of small cocohuts with shared bathroom, and an equally compact restaurant on the banks of the river. One of the real highlights of staying at this little ghetto of character is the fabulously juxtaposed view of the Goa Grand Intercontinental Resort.

Oasis (☎ yoga 9822969910; ☎ 8am-late) A popular place to eat for its Russian and Japanese cuisine and social atmosphere. Movies are played every night (often in Russian) and yoga classes are held four times a week (admission by donation, 8am to 9.30am).

Tantra (mains Rs 30-120) Has an undeniably effective gimmick to distinguish itself from other beach shack restaurants: there is a small elevated eating area built into the roof which is a perfect place at sunset if you can get to it first.

Namaste (beach huts Rs 600, huts back from beach Rs 250, cottages Rs 1000) This is a sociable place to eat (mains Rs 30 to 100) with friendly staff. There are also huts available and one quaint cottage.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Patnem Beach is reached from the back road running south from Palolem (past the Oceanic Hotel), then turning right at the Hotel Sea View. Alternatively, walk about 20 minutes along the path from Palolem via Colomb Bay or catch a bus heading in the right direction (Rs 4).

Rajbag

☎ 0832

Beyond Patnem is Rajbag Beach, an exposed but isolated stretch of sand that ends at the mouth of the Talpona River. It's an easy walk along the beach between Patnem and Rajbag, but this once-deserted beach is now dominated by the massive five-star **Goa Grand Intercontinental Resort** (☎ 2667777; www.intercontinental.com; Raj Baga, Canacona; ste garden-view/sea-view/luxury/presidential ste US\$275/325/650/1500; ☎). Despite the somewhat formidable appearance, the space is enormously well-used.

DETOUR: AROUND RAJBAG

Although there are other beaches to the south of Rajbag, they are inaccessible by road, apart from **Polem Beach**, which is at the very southern tip of Goa, only a couple of kilometres from the state border and 26km from Palolem.

The beach is indeed deserted, but this may largely be because of the slightly seedy feel of the town behind it, apparently something of a port for smugglers of goods from neighbouring Karnataka state. If you have some reason for wanting to go here (perhaps you're hiding from the law?) you will find a room at the small building at the beach; it serves a few drinks and has a couple of less-than-basic rooms (that may not even have a bed) for Rs 100. There's one cocohut on the beach (Rs 200).

To find Polem Beach head down the NH17 towards Karwar. A couple of kilometres before the border of Karnataka you will see a yellow bus stand, opposite which is a very poorly signed turn-off to Polem Beach.

The hotel was a source of controversy when it was built partly on ground held sacred by local people. A small Hindu temple stood at the proposed entrance to the resort. Finding they were unable to demolish the temple, the developers built a fence – and the entire resort – around it and now market it as part of the attraction! You can visit the temple without entering the resort.

A narrow road runs behind the beach from Patnem, via the tiny village of Kindlebag, to the Talpona River and there's a sandy path from there to the beach. Local boatmen can ferry you across the river if you want to explore further south to **Galgibaga**, a small beach and protected area visited by rare olive ridley turtles. There are a couple of rustic restaurant-shacks on the banks of the Talpona where the road ends.

At Kindlebag, **Molyma Resorts** (☎ 2643028; molyma2001@yahoo.co.in; d Rs 430-540), a fair way back from the beach, is the only budget place to stay in this area but it has a rather deserted, forlorn feel. You would do better even at overpriced Palolem Beach nearby.

COTIGAO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Proclaimed as a conservation area in 1962, **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary** (adult/child Rs 5/2, camera/video Rs 25/100, motorcycle/car Rs 10/50; ☎ 7am-5.30pm) is the second-largest sanctuary in Goa with an area of 86 sq km. As with the other sanctuaries, most of the animals prefer to remain hidden, so you may have to stay overnight to see much more than a monkey. Your chances are best if you spend either a late evening or early morning in the tree-top watchtower.

For those who have the time and patience there is the chance to see, among other species, Indian bison or gaur, barking deer, sambar and jackals. If you come here on a day trip, there are pleasant walks through the forest and the area contains some unspoilt ghat scenery.

There's a small **Nature Interpretation Centre** and reception about 1.5km in from the main road, where there is some basic information and even samples of various animal faeces, which you can peruse while your tickets are painstakingly written up. Also here is the 'Animal Rescue Centre'; perhaps it could be more appropriately named 'Animal Detention Centre' given that the rescuee was not the animal, but rather the person the animal

bit. Whether their rescue has been a raging success is at issue given that a panther once managed to get into the enclosure.

The park boundary is a further 1.5km in from the reception centre, and the two observation towers are 6km and 9km from the park entrance, so it makes sense to have your own transport or be prepared to put in a lot of walking. Ideally, make an early start from Palolem.

SLEEPING

There is actually some Forest Department accommodation available. There is the small **Bulbul Cottage** (d without bathroom Rs 250) just behind the Nature Interpretation Centre. There are more cottages being built in its image. The far better option if you can get it is the stunningly good value **Peacock Cottage** (cottages Rs 500), which is the size of a small house. It has a well-kept garden, enormous bedroom and a separate but private bathroom and toilet. To book either of these cottages, call the **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary office** (☎ 0832-2639265).

An interesting place to stay is **Pepper Valley** (☎ 0832-2633370; www.peppervalley.com; Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary, Dabemola, Partagal, Canacona; huts Rs 350, r Rs 700), which consists of six well-made cocohuts with mosquito nets, fans and pleasant curtained walls built alongside a picturesque river, and four plain but private rooms. There is also yoga on site, and a pleasant chill-out area built alongside the lake, where there is sometimes a bonfire at night. The small restaurant in the pepper plantation is comprised of a few tables placed under the trees – a rather pleasant place to eat a meal. Staff also arrange trekking and river tours throughout the area. There is a large sign heading to Pepper Valley at the entrance to the sanctuary, or you can turn left at the nature interpretation centre and follow the smaller signs.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The entrance to the park is 7km southeast of Chaudi on the NH17. As you head south from Chaudi, the first entrance you come to (signposted 'Govt of Goa Forest Check Post') allows general access to the area. The second, some 2km further on, is the entrance to the wildlife sanctuary. Any bus heading south to Karwar can drop you on the main road, 2km from the park entrance.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'