

# Goa



Those who haven't visited Goa tend to imagine it as some kind of Indian Costa Brava but with more cosmic karma and, thanks to this image, many people vow never to set foot there. However, Goa, like everywhere in India, is never quite what you expect. In places the infamous hash-fuelled days of Goa's golden hippy years are still alive and kicking and in others the all-inclusive package holiday is king. But these are two very narrow sides of the Goan experience and anyone who spends much time here will discover that Goa contains more variety and vitality than almost anywhere else in India. Head into Panaji (Panjim), one of India's smallest and most likeable state capitals, and instead of self-contained tourist resorts and trinket-selling dreadlocks you'll discover a Portuguese pantry of flaking architectural delicacies spiced up with Indian exuberance. Inland, you can stand in greener-than-green fields picking vanilla pods or bathing with elephants.

The main draws of Goa are, of course, the beaches, which are every bit as cliché beautiful as they're supposed to be, but just as much of an attraction is Goa's intriguing fusion of colonial Portugal and modern India. There is almost nowhere else in India where the influence of the former colonial overlords remains as strong as it does in Goa and it's not at all unusual to find crucifixes hanging on walls next to posters of Shiva and groups of elderly Goan men conversing in Portuguese. Goa may not be as cool as it once was but it's certainly just as magical.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the old Portuguese quarter of **Panaji** (Panjim; p843) and savour its rich Mediterranean flavour
- Gaze in awe at the magnificent cathedrals of **Old Goa** (p849), the fallen city that once rivalled Lisbon
- Make footprints on idyllic **beaches** (p866) in the far north of Goa
- Get nostalgic in the crumbling ballrooms of colonial mansions in **Chandor** (p870)
- Barter for souvenirs at the legendary Wednesday flea market and then watch the sunset at **Anjuna** (p861)
- Hire a moped or motorbike and discover the back lanes of the luminous green countryside (p842)



## History

In the 3rd century BC Goa formed part of the Mauryan empire. Later it was ruled by the Satavahanas of Kolhapur and eventually passed to the Chalukyas of Badami from AD 580 to 750.

Goa fell to the Muslims for the first time in 1312, but they weren't fans of the beach and eventually left in 1370 under the forceful persuasion of Harihara I of the Vijayanagar empire. During the next 100 years Goa's harbours were important landing places for ships carrying Arabian horses for the Vijayanagar cavalry.

Blessed as it is by natural harbours and wide rivers, Goa was the ideal base for the seafaring Portuguese, who arrived in 1510 aiming to control the spice route from the East. Jesuit missionaries led by St Francis Xavier arrived in 1542. For a while, Portuguese control was limited to a small area around Old Goa, but by the middle of the 16th century it had expanded to include the provinces of Bardez and Salcete.

The Marathas (the central Indian people who controlled much of India at various points in time) almost vanquished the Portuguese in the late 18th century, and there was a brief occupation by the British during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. However, it was not until 1961, when the Indian army marched into Goa, that Portuguese occupation finally came to its end on the subcontinent.

Today Goa has one of India's highest per-capita incomes, with farming, fishing, tourism and iron-ore mining forming the basis of its economy.

## Climate

The monsoon hits Goa between June and the end of September; many places close up shop during this time. From late October to February the climate is near perfect after which the humidity starts rising.

## Information

The **Goa Tourism Development Corporation** (GTDC; [www.goa-tourism.com](http://www.goa-tourism.com)), commonly known as Goa Tourism, has branches in Panaji (p843), Margao (p869) and at Dabolim Airport (Goa's airport, 29km south of Panaji). You can also pick up information on the state from the Government of India tourist office in Panaji (p843).

### FAST FACTS

- Population: 1.34 million
- Area: 3701 sq km
- Capital: Panaji (Panjim)
- Main languages: Konkani, Marathi, English and Hindi
- Telephone code: ☎ 0832
- When to go: October to March

### ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation prices in Goa are based on high, middle (shoulder) and low seasons. The high season is December to late January, the middle periods are October to late November and February to June, and the low season is July to September (the monsoon). Unless otherwise stated, prices quoted in this chapter are high-season rates. There's a fourth season, when some hotel prices rise again, sometimes to ludicrous heights, over the peak Christmas period from around 22 December to 3 January.

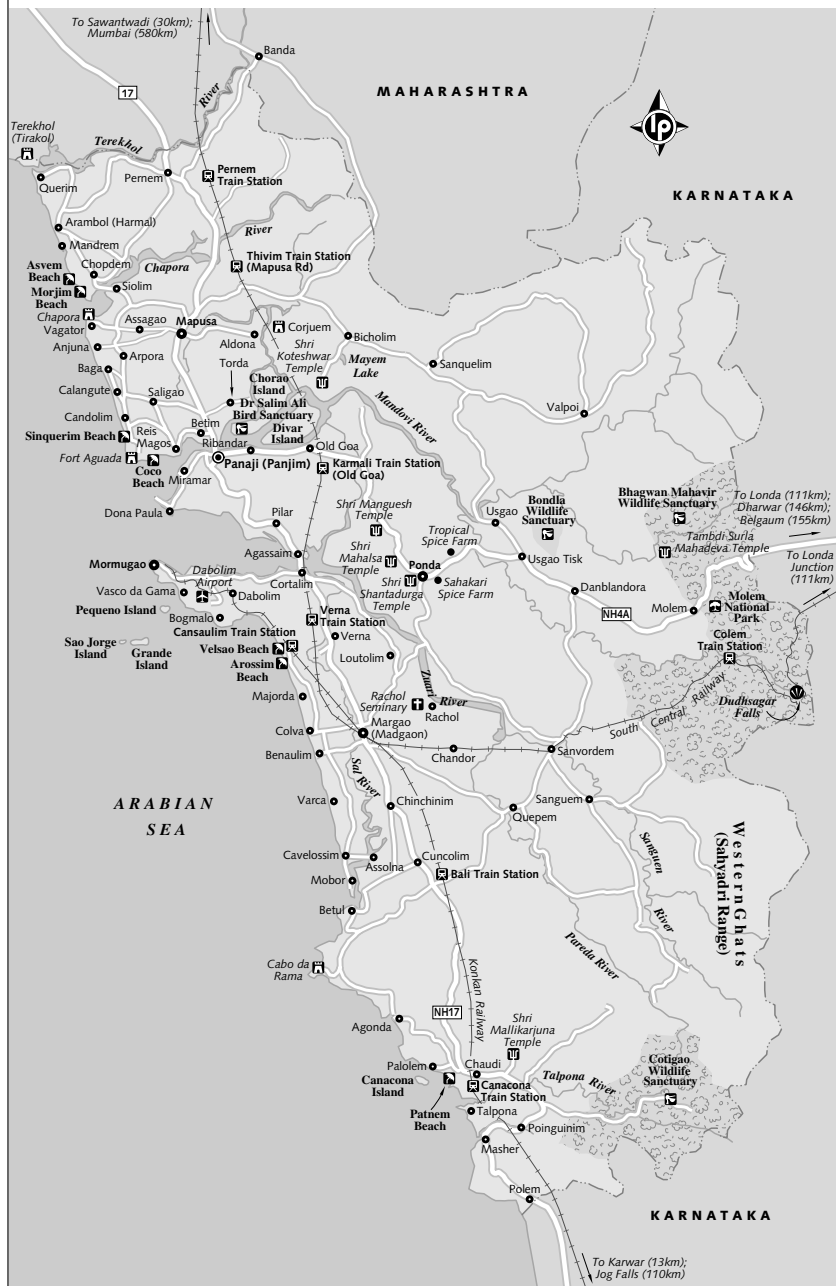
Most places have noon checkout but some are 9am or 10am.

### Activities

Water sports such as **parasailing**, **jet-skiing** and **windsurfing** are available on the beaches at Candolim (p853), Calangute and Baga (p857), and Colva (p872). You can try **paragliding** at Arambol (p867) and Anjuna (p861). Although the waters off Goa aren't crystal clear, there are three **scuba-diving** outfits offering boat dives and PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) courses: the very professional Barracuda Diving is based at the Goa Marriott Resort in Miramar (p847); Goa Diving is in Bogmalo (p871); and Goa Dive Center is in Baga (p857).

**Boat trips** to spot dolphins, go fishing or cruise the backwaters are also available from most beaches, including Arambol (p867) and Palolem (p876) – the boat owners will probably find you. An interesting day trip is to visit one of the **spice plantations** near Ponda (p877), where you get a tour and lunch for around Rs 300. You can go by yourself but most tour operators offer this trip. One of the best tour operators is **Day Tripper** (☎ 2276726; [www.daytrippergoa.com](http://www.daytrippergoa.com)), based in Calangute; it also offers rafting in Karnataka.

# GOA



GOA

If you're interested in **yoga, reiki, Ayurvedic massage, reflexology** or any other sort of spiritual health regime, you'll find courses and classes advertised at many beach resorts. An hour-long Ayurvedic massage costs around Rs 650. The courses mentioned in the text only run during the peak tourist season from November to March.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Theft from rooms is something to watch out for, particularly on party nights at places such as Anjuna and Vagator, or if you're renting a flimsy beach shack at Palolem or Arambol.

Muggings have been reported in Goa – avoid walking alone at night unless there are plenty of people around.

### FESTIVALS IN GOA

Goa's Christian heritage is reflected in the number of feast days and festivals that follow the religious calendar. Panaji (Panjim), in particular, has a bumper crop of nonreligious festivals.

**Feast of Three Kings** (6 Jan; Chandor, p870) At churches local boys re-enact the story of the three kings bearing gifts for Christ.

**Pop, Beat & Jazz Music Festival** (Feb; Panaji, p843)

**Shigmotsav (Shigmo) of Holi** (Feb/Mar; statewide) This is Goa's version of the Hindu spring festival Holi. Coloured water and powders are thrown around at everyone and anyone and parades are held in the main towns.

**Sabado Gordo** (Fat Saturday; Feb/Mar; Panaji, p843) Part of the statewide Carnival, this festival is held on the Saturday before Lent. It's celebrated by a procession of floats and raucous street partying.

**Carnival** (Mar; statewide) A three-day party heralding the arrival of spring.

**Procession of All Saints** (Mar/Apr; Old Goa, p849) On the fifth Monday in Lent, this is the only procession of its sort outside Rome. Thirty statues of saints are brought out from storage and paraded around Old Goa's neighbouring villages.

**Feast of Our Lady of Miracles** (Apr; Mapusa, p852) A Hindu and Christian feast day held 16 days after Easter.

**Beach Bonanza** (May; Calangute, p856, Colva p872, & Miramar, p846) Several food and entertainment festivals, known as 'Beach Bonanzas', are held at various beach towns.

**Igitun Chalne** (May; Bicholim) Held at Sirigao Temple in Bicholim province, this fire-walking festival is one of Goa's most distinctive events. The high point is when devotees of the goddess Lairaya walk across burning coals to prove their devotion.

**Feast of St Anthony** (13 Jun; statewide) It is said that if the monsoon has not arrived by the time of this feast day, a statue of the saint should be lowered into the family well to hasten the arrival of the rain.

**Feast of St John** (24 Jun; statewide) A thanksgiving for the arrival of the monsoon.

**Feast of St Peter & St Paul** (29 Jun; statewide) Another monsoon celebration, this time by the fishing community, particularly in the region of Bardez, between Panaji and Mapusa. Dance, drama and music performances are held on makeshift stages floating on the river.

**Feast of St Lawrence** (Aug; statewide) The end of the monsoon is marked by this festival, as well as the reopening of the Mandovi to river traffic.

**Fama de Menino Jesus** (2nd Mon in Oct; Colva, p872) Colva's biggest feast day, this festival is when the Menino Jesus (a statue of the infant Jesus said to perform miracles) is paraded.

**Goa Heritage Festival** (Nov; Panaji, p843) A two-day cultural event held at Campal, featuring music, dancing and traditional food.

**Tiatr Festival** (Nov; Panaji, p843) Another drama-arts programme held as a competition at the Kala Academy (p848).

**International Film Festival of India** (IFFI; www.iffi.nic.in; normally for 10 days from the last week of Nov; Panaji, p843) Based in Goa since 2004, this is the largest film festival in India and features numerous exciting art-house films from across the world.

**Konkani Drama Festival** (Nov/Dec; Panaji, p843) A programme of Konkani music, dance and theatre held at the Kala Academy (p848) – it's a competition, with prizes awarded to the best performing group at the end.

**Feast of St Francis Xavier** (3 Dec; Old Goa, p849) Old Goa's biggest bash, this feast is preceded by a 10-day Novena. There are lots of festivities and huge crowds during this period, especially for the Exposition of St Francis Xavier's body, which is held once every 10 years (see boxed text, p851).

**Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception** (8 Dec; Margao, p868, & Panaji, p843) A large fair and a church service is held at the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (p845) in Panaji. Around the same time, Margao celebrates with a large fair.

Some foreign women find Goa anything but a relaxing beach holiday and reports of harassment are disappointingly common. For many foreign women, beach dress code is dramatically different to that normally preferred by Indian women. This has led to problems with some groups of young Indian men coming to Goa for no other reason than to stare at scantily clad women. It's an unpleasant situation and one that both groups hold a certain amount of responsibility for. Many foreigners do seem to forget that they are no longer at home and that dress standards here are different, and the harassers seem unaware that their behaviour would be considered by foreigners to be unacceptable. The best solution is to aim for the quieter beaches and just give in to the fact that things that might be normal elsewhere, such as topless sunbathing, are taboo in some places and by doing it you are only likely to cause problems for yourself. Though the harassment rarely steps beyond staring or a few comments there have been instances of physical attack.

Note that the monsoonal seas are very dangerous.

## DRUGS

Acid, ecstasy, cocaine and hash – the drugs of choice for many party-goers – are illegal (though still very much available) and any attempt to purchase or carry them is fraught with danger. Fort Aguada prison houses some foreigners serving lengthy sentences for drug offences.

Possession of even a small amount of *charas* (hashish) can mean 10 years in prison. Cases of corrupt policemen approaching hapless

tourists and threatening to 'plant' drugs on them, or simply demanding a relatively large *baksheesh* (bribe) on the spot are becoming less common than in the past, but the possibility of such occurrences does remain.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Goa's airport, Dabolim, is 29km south of Panaji, on the coast near Vasco da Gama. Most of India's domestic airlines operate services here, and several direct charter companies fly into Goa from the UK and Europe. Be aware that it's illegal to fly into India on a scheduled flight and out on a charter flight. If you book an international flight from Goa, it will involve a domestic flight to Mumbai (Bombay), or another international airport, and a connection there; there are numerous flights between Goa and Mumbai. Domestic flights are listed in Domestic Scheduled Flights from Goa (below). Between them the budget carriers of Air Decan, Spice Jet, Kingfisher and IndiGo link Goa up with virtually every decent-sized town in India for prices that are normally much more competitive than their scheduled brothers.

### BUS

Long-distance interstate buses operate to/from Panaji, Margao, Mapusa and Calangute, and you can pick up some buses from Chaudi near Palolem. See those sections for more information.

### TRAIN

The **Konkan Railway** ([www.konkanrailway.com](http://www.konkanrailway.com)) connects Goa with Mumbai and Mangalore. The main station in Goa is Madgaon in Margao,

### DOMESTIC SCHEDULED FLIGHTS FROM GOA

| Destination | Airline code | Price (US\$) | Duration (hr) | Frequency |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| Bengaluru   | IC           | 75           | 1½            | daily     |
|             | 9W           | 105          | 1             | daily     |
| Chennai     | IC           | 99           | 1             | daily     |
| Kochi       | IC           | 90           | 1             | daily     |
| Delhi       | IC           | 165          | 4             | daily     |
|             | S2           | 100          | 2½            | 2 daily   |
| Mumbai      | IC           | 65           | 1             | 3 daily   |
|             | S2           | 45           | 1             | daily     |
|             | 9W           | 100          | 1             | 3 daily   |

IC – Indian Airlines; S2 – Sahara Airlines; 9W – Jet Airways

**WHERE'S THE PARTY?**

Goa has long been renowned among Western visitors as a party place where all-night, open-air raves dominated the scene in places such as Anjuna and Vagator. A central government ban on loud music in open spaces between 10pm and 6am was aimed partly at curbing Goa's intrusive party scene, but with a tourist industry to nurture (and a bit of bribery) the authorities have tended to turn a blind eye to parties during the peak Christmas–New Year period. Rave parties are organised at open-air locations such as Disco Valley at Vagator and Bamboo Forest in Anjuna, and occasionally at Arambol, but they are not advertised so you'll have to ask around to find out what's on and be prepared to ride around aimlessly on a motorcycle looking for the right place. More permanent nightclubs have also become established in the Candolim–Calangute–Baga area over the years.

but expresses and passenger trains stop at most other stations along the line.

There are two daily expresses between Margao's Madgaon train station and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST; the old Victoria Terminus), two between Madgaon and Lokmanya Tilak and one between Madgaon and Dadar (both in northern Mumbai). From Mumbai CST the overnight *Konkan Kanya Express* departs at 11pm (sleeper/3AC Rs 273/771, 12 hours) and the *Mandavi Express* departs at 6.55am. The fastest train (in theory) is the *Shatabdi Express*, which departs from Dadar at 5.35am daily except Wednesday (2nd class/AC seat Rs 197/675, six hours). From Margao to Mumbai, the *Konkan Kanya Express* leaves at 6pm, the *Mandavi Express* at 9.50am and the *Shatabdi Express* at 11.40am.

There are 12 direct trains between Margao and Mangalore (sleeper/3AC Rs 207/533, 4½ hours), most stopping at Mangalore's Kankana station.

The South Central Railway operates from Vasco da Gama via Margao and Londa, and runs to Pune, Delhi and Bengaluru (Bangalore). The *Nizamuddin–Goa Express* goes to Delhi (sleeper/3AC Rs 531/1438, 41 hours).

The Delhi–Goa (Margao) *Rajdhani Express* (3AC/2AC/1st class Rs 1985/2915/5430, 25½ hours) leaves Delhi Nizamuddin station Sunday and Tuesday. It also goes from Delhi to Goa every Wednesday and Friday, leaving Margao at 11.30am.

Bookings can be made at Madgaon (p870) and Vasco da Gama stations, or at the train reservation office at Panaji's Kadamba bus stand (p848). Other useful stations on the Konkan route are Pernem for Arambol, Thivim for Mapusa and the northern beaches, Karmali (Old Goa) for Panaji and Canacona for Palolem.

**Getting Around****BOAT**

Passenger/vehicle ferries cross the state's many rivers. Foot passengers ride for free, and motorcycles cost Rs 4.

**BUS**

The state-run Kadamba bus company is the main operator of public buses, although there are also private companies running more comfortable buses to Mumbai, Hampi, Bengaluru and several other interstate destinations. Local buses are cheap, services are frequent and they run to just about everywhere, eventually. Express buses run between Panaji and Mapusa, and Panaji and Margao (see p848 for more details).

**CAR**

Self-drive car hire is not worth the trouble, especially since it's more expensive than a chauffeur-driven car.

**MOTORCYCLE**

Goa is one of the few places in India where hiring a motorcycle or scooter is both cheap and easy, and the relatively short distances make travel a breeze, although India is no place to learn to ride a motorcycle, or even a scooter. Every other traveller you meet seems to have been involved in a bike accident of some description. Bikes available include old Enfields, more modern Yamaha 100s and the gearless Kinetic Honda scooters. Rental prices vary according to season, length of hire and quality of the bike. In the peak Christmas season, you're looking at paying up to Rs 300 per day for a scooter, Rs 400 for the small bikes and Rs 500 for an Enfield. Outside this time, when there's a glut of idle bikes, especially at the northern

beach resorts, you should only pay Rs 150 per day for a scooter, Rs 250 for the small bikes and Rs 350 for an Enfield if you hire for a week or more. In most cases you don't need to provide a deposit, but you'll probably be asked for your passport details (don't hand over the passport itself) and the name of your hotel. Guesthouses, hotels and places where taxi drivers congregate are good places to hire a bike, but you'll get plenty of offers on the street at beach resorts.

### TAXI

If the thought of riding a motorbike in Goa turns your knuckles white then taxis are available everywhere and a full day's sightseeing, depending on the distance, is likely to be around Rs 1000.

Motorcycles are a licensed form of taxi in Goa. They are cheap, easy to find, backpacks are no problem and they can be identified by a yellow front mudguard.

## NORTH GOA

### PANAJI (PANJIM)

pop 98,915

Panaji (also known as Panjim) is a town of shades; the pastel shades of the buildings, romantic shades of the Mediterranean, excitable shades of Latin America and noisy shades of India. It's a town utterly unique to the sub-continent, yet for most travellers it tends to be a quick after thought to a Goan beach holiday. This is a grave mistake because the narrow winding streets of its old Portuguese quarter, and its fine location at the mouth of the broad Mandovi River, make Panaji one of the indisputable highlights of Goa. To get the most out of Panaji spend a couple of days here and make it a base for explorations of nearby Old Goa (p849) and central Goa (p877).

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

**Hotel Mandovi** (☎ 2426270; Dayanand Bandothkar Marg; ☎ 9am-9pm) Small, well-stocked bookshop in hotel lobby.

**Pauline Book & Media Centre** (☎ 2231158; Rani Pramila Arcade; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am-1pm Thu) Specialising in self-help, spiritual and religious titles. Down a laneway off 18th June Rd.

**Singbal's Book House** (☎ 2425747; Church Sq; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

### INTERNET ACCESS

There are plenty of internet cafés. Try the following:

**Log In** (1st fl, Durga Chambers, 18th June Rd; per hr Rs 30; ☎ 9am-11pm)

**Shruti Communications** (31st January Rd; per hr Rs 35; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Goa Medical College Hospital** (☎ 2458700; Bambolin) Situated 9km south of Panaji on National Hwy 17.

### MONEY

**Centurion** (MG Rd) Has a 24-hour ATM accepting international cards (MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro, Visa). There's another branch on Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd.

**HDFC** (18th June Rd) There's another branch nearby.

**Thomas Cook** (☎ 2221312; Dayanand Bandothkar Marg; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, 10am-5pm Sun Oct-Mar) Changes travellers cheques commission-free and gives cash advances on Visa and MasterCard.

**UTI Bank** (ground fl, Cardozo Bldg) Located next to Paulo Travels, it has an ATM near the bus stand.

### POST

**Main post office** (MG Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) Has a Speedpost parcel service and reliable poste restante (open 9.30am to 4pm).

### TELEPHONE

There are also plenty of private Private Call Offices (PCO) and STD/ISD offices.

**Central telegraph office** (Dr Atmaram Borkar Rd; ☎ 7am-8.30pm)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

#### Goa Tourism Development Corporation office

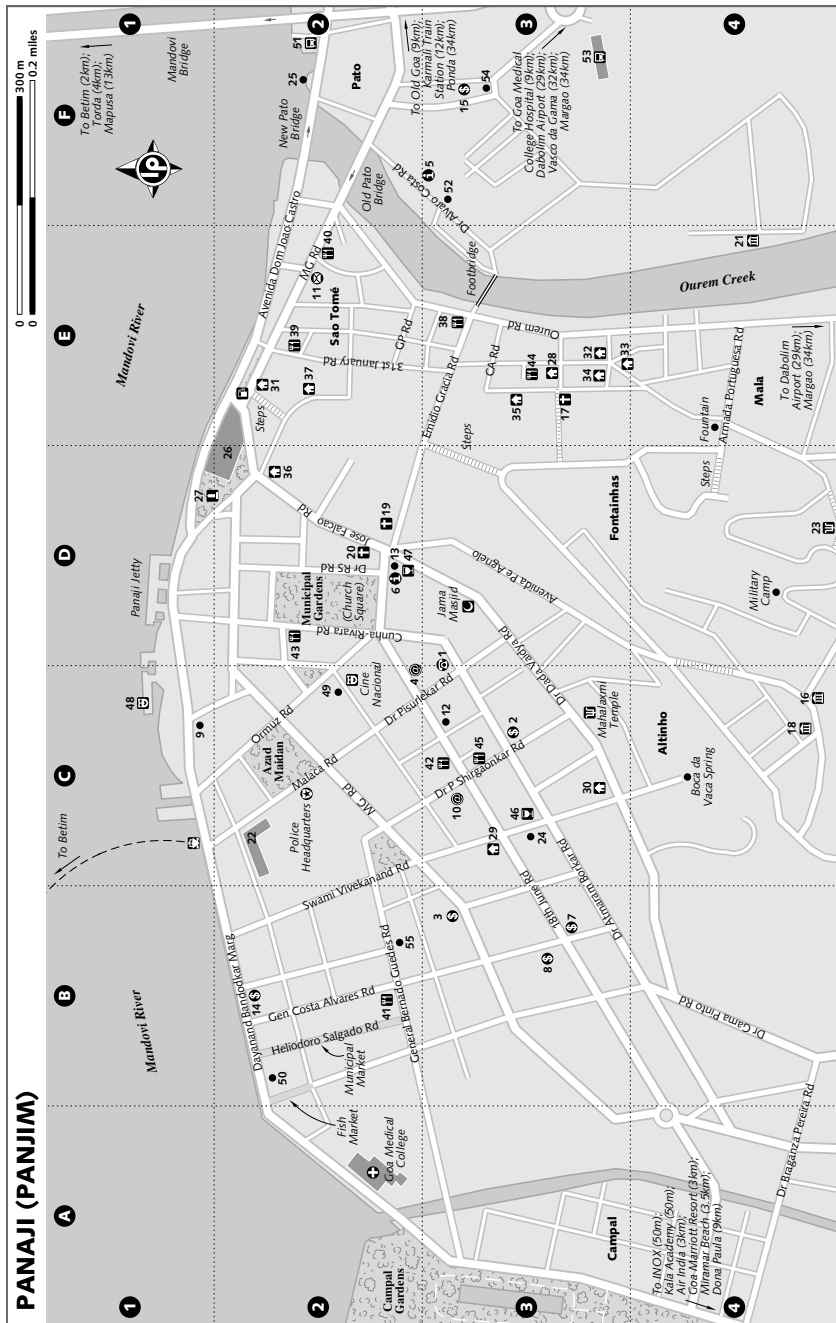
(GTDC; ☎ 2427972; www.goa-tourism.com; Dr Alvaro Costa Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.45pm Mon-Fri) Commonly known as Goa Tourism, GTDC is just south of the Old Pato Bridge. There's not a lot of information to be gleaned here, but you can pick up maps of Goa and Panaji and book local tours.

**Government of India tourist office** (☎ 2223412; indiatourismgoa@sancharnet.in; Comunidade Bldg, Church Sq; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) This office is far more helpful. Staff here are bright and enthusiastic, and qualified guides can be arranged (from Rs 350/500 per half-/full day depending on the size of the group).

### Sights & Activities

Panaji is a city to savour on leisurely strolls, especially true in the atmospheric Sao Tomé, Fontainhas and Altino areas (see p846). The warren of narrow streets, lined with a clutch of churches, sparkling blue-and-white tiles,







|  |          |    |  |
|--|----------|----|--|
| <b>INFORMATION</b>                                     |          |    |  |
| Central Telegraph Office.....                          | 1        | D3 |  |
| Centurion Bank.....                                    | 2        | C3 |  |
| Centurion Bank ATM.....                                | 3        | B3 |  |
| Cozy Nook Travel.....                                  | 4        | C2 |  |
| Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) Office..... | 5        | F3 |  |
| Government of India Tourist Office.....                | 6        | D2 |  |
| HDFC Bank.....   | 7        | B3 |  |
| HDFC Bank.....   | 8        | B3 |  |
| Hotel Mandovi.....                                     | 9        | C1 |  |
| Log In.....  | 10       | C3 |  |
| Main Post Office.....                                  | 11       | E2 |  |
| Pauline Book & Media Centre.....                       | 12       | C3 |  |
| Shruti Communications.....                             | (see 39) |    |  |
| Singhal's Book House.....                              | 13       | D2 |  |
| Thomas Cook.....                                       | 14       | B2 |  |
| UTI Bank.....  | 15       | F3 |  |
| <b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>                         |          |    |  |
| Bishop's Palace.....                                   | 16       | C4 |  |
| Chapel of St Sebastian.....                            | 17       | E3 |  |
| Chief Minister's Residence.....                        | 18       | C4 |  |
| Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.....   | 19       | D2 |  |
| Crucifix.....  | 20       | D2 |  |
| Gitanjali Gallery.....                                 | 21       | E4 |  |
| Goa State Museum.....                                  | 22       | C2 |  |
| Institute Menezes Braganza.....                        | 23       | D4 |  |
| Maruti Temple.....                                     | 23       | D4 |  |
| Panaji Central Library.....                            | (see 22) |    |  |
| Public Observatory.....                                | 24       | C3 |  |
| River Cruises.....                                     | (see 25) |    |  |
| Santa Monica Jetty.....                                | 25       | F2 |  |
| Secretariat Building.....                              | 26       | D2 |  |
| Statue of Abbé Faria.....                              | 27       | D1 |  |
| <b>SLEEPING</b>  |          |    |  |
| Afonso Guest House.....                                | 28       | E3 |  |
| Hotel Fidalgo.....                                     | 29       | C3 |  |
| <b>DRINKING</b>  |          |    |  |
| Acce Pub.....  | 30       | C3 |  |
| Gadhino Bar.....                                       | 31       | E2 |  |
| Hotel Venite.....                                      | 32       | E3 |  |
| Panjim Inn.....  | 33       | E3 |  |
| Panjim Peoples.....                                    | 33       | E3 |  |
| Panjim Pousada.....                                    | 34       | E3 |  |
| Park Lane Lodge.....                                   | 35       | E3 |  |
| Republica Hotel.....                                   | 36       | D2 |  |
| Vaz Residence.....                                     | 37       | E2 |  |
| <b>EATING</b>  |          |    |  |
| A Ferradura.....                                       | 38       | E3 |  |
| Hotel Venite.....                                      | 39       | E2 |  |
| Lourenços.....   | 40       | E2 |  |
| New Café Hema.....                                     | 41       | B2 |  |
| Sher-E-Punjab.....                                     | 42       | C3 |  |
| Sher-E-Punjab.....                                     | 43       | D2 |  |
| Viva Panjim.....                                       | 44       | E3 |  |
| Zen Restaurant.....                                    | 45       | C3 |  |
| <b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>                                   |          |    |  |
| Casino Goa.....  | 48       | C1 |  |
| <b>TRANSPORT</b>                                       |          |    |  |
| Daud M Aga Cycle Store.....                            | 49       | C2 |  |
| Indian Airlines.....                                   | 50       | B2 |  |
| Interstate Private Bus Stand.....                      | 51       | F2 |  |
| Jet Airways.....                                       | 52       | F3 |  |
| Kadamba Bus Stand.....                                 | 53       | F3 |  |
| Paulo Travels.....                                     | (see 54) |    |  |
| Private Bus Agents.....                                | 54       | F3 |  |
| Sahara Airlines.....                                   | 55       | B2 |  |
| Train Reservation Office.....                          | (see 53) |    |  |
| Mayfair Hotel.....                                     | 30       | C3 |  |
| Panaji Residency.....                                  | 31       | E2 |  |
| Panjim Inn.....  | 32       | E3 |  |
| Panjim Peoples.....                                    | 33       | E3 |  |
| Panjim Pousada.....                                    | 34       | E3 |  |
| Park Lane Lodge.....                                   | 35       | E3 |  |
| Republica Hotel.....                                   | 36       | D2 |  |
| Vaz Residence.....                                     | 37       | E2 |  |

shuttered windows and tiny overhanging balconies, is a pleasure to get lost in. Or wander beside the Mandovi River, where a promenade was laid in 2004 for the 35th International Film Festival India. The annual festival is now a permanent fixture on the Goan calendar.

### CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The centre piece of the city is the main church, originally consecrated in 1541, which stands above the square in the town centre. Panaji was the first port of call for voyages from Lisbon and newly arrived sailors would visit this strikingly whitewashed church to give thanks for a safe crossing before continuing to Old Goa. Mass is held here daily in English, Konkani and Portuguese.

### GOA STATE MUSEUM

An eclectic collection of items awaits visitors to this large museum (☎ 2458006; www.goamuseum.nic.in; EDC Complex, Pato; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri), in a rather forlorn area southwest of the Kadamba bus stand. As well as Christian art, Hindu and Jain sculpture and bronzes, and paintings from all over India, exhibits include an elaborately carved table used in the Goa Inquisition, and, just to prove that wasting money on the lottery isn't a recent phenomenon, an antique pair of rotary lottery machines. There is also a small wildlife conservation gallery.

### SECRETARIAT BUILDING

Dating from the 16th century, this handsome colonial building was originally the palace of the Muslim ruler Adil Shah before becoming the viceroys' official residence in 1759. Now it's government offices. Immediately to the west, the bizarre statue of a man apparently about to strangle a woman is of Abbé Faria, a famous Goan hypnotist, and his assistant.

### INSTITUTE MENEZES BRAGANZA

On the west side of the Azad Maidan, the institute houses Panaji Central Library (Malaca Rd; ☎ 9.30am-1.15pm & 2-5.45pm Mon-Fri) and is worth popping into to see the pretty blue-and-white azulejos (glazed ceramic-tile compositions) in the entrance hall.

### PUBLIC OBSERVATORY

Reach for the stars at the observatory (Swami Vivekanand Rd; ☎ 7-9pm Nov-May) on the rooftop of Junta House.

## MIRAMAR

The closest beach to Panaji is at **Miramar**, 3km southwest of the city along Dayanand Bandedkar Marg. It's far from the cream of Goa's beaches but is pleasant enough for a sunset stroll and is a good short bike ride out the city. On the way you'll pass the Goa Marriot Resort (opposite), where you'll find **Barracuda Diving** (☎ 6656294; www.barracadadiving.com), one of the state's most professional diving operations.

## Walking Tour

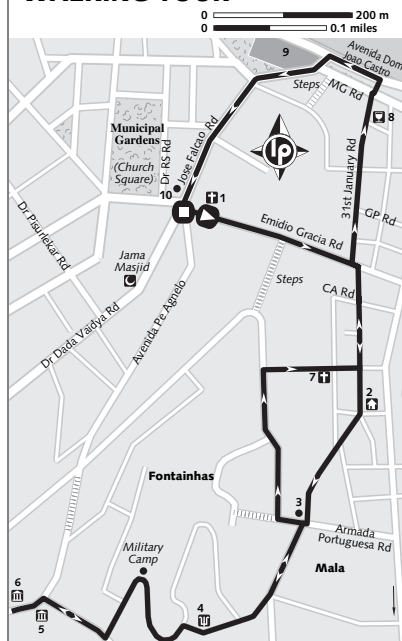
From the **Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception** (1; p845) walk east up the hill along Emidio Gracia Rd (Corte de Oiterio). At the four-way junction, where you'll see fruit-seller barrows, turn right into 31st January Rd. Continue down to the heritage hotel **Panjim Inn** (2; opposite).

**Start & Finish:** Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

**Distance:** 6km

**Duration:** 1½ hours

## WALKING TOUR



Take the right fork of the road and continue south past the small **fountain** (3; not working) from which Fontainhas gets its name. Keep walking in the same direction until you see the steps off to the right leading uphill to the ornate, salmon-pink **Maruti Temple** (4), dedicated to the monkey god Hanuman. The temple's veranda provides fine views towards the Mandovi River. Nip behind the temple and follow the road up into the Altinho district.

When you reach a junction with a red 'stop and proceed' sign, turn right and continue around to the **Bishop's Palace** (5), residence of the Archbishop of Goa. This grand white mansion, with a silver painted Jesus statue outside, lords it over the much-humbler **Chief Minister's Residence** (6) across the road. After gazing through the fence of these two buildings retrace your steps back past the Maruti Temple and back towards the fountain. Turn left at the crossroads just before this and head towards the steps, just before these turn right and head up hill past lots of big old houses. After around 300m you'll see a set of steps on your right descending downhill and marked by a crucifix. Heading down these you'll pass by many colourful houses until you reach the **Chapel of St Sebastian** (7). Built in the 1880s, its most striking feature is a crucifix that originally stood in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa.

Walk back to 31st January Rd and return to where the road meets up with the fruit stalls. Then, at the junction with Emido Garcia Rd, continue straight over and into the brightly painted streets of Sao Tomé, pausing for a drink at the **Hotel Venite** (8; p848). Afterwards continue on to the river, turn left and walk down to the **Secretariat Building** (9), left again at Jose Falcao Rd and, keeping an eye peeled for the strange flower- and star-coated **crucifix** (10) built into a wall on the right, back to where you started at Church Sq.

## Courses

**India on the Menu** (www.indiaonthemenu.com) is a recommended five-day Indian cookery course offered by London-based **On the Go Tours** (www.onthegotours.com). The programme is based in Betim, just across the river from Panaji, and covers North and South Indian cuisines, Goan cuisine and a market tour. On the final day you can choose to be taught how to cook your favourite Indian dishes by the course tutor. Each of the cooking sessions lasts half a day (including lunch).

## Cruises & Tours

GTDC operates entertaining hour-long **cruises** (Rs 100; ☎ dusk cruise 6pm, sundown cruise 7.15pm) along the Mandovi River aboard the *Santa Monica*. They include a live band performing Goan folk songs and dances. On full-moon nights there is a two-hour cruise at 8.30pm (Rs 150). Cruises depart from the Santa Monica jetty next to the huge Mandovi Bridge and tickets can be purchased here. **Royal Cruises** (☎ 2435599), has virtually identical trips from Santa Monica jetty starting around 6.15pm (Rs 100), as well as open-sea 'dolphin cruises' (from mid-October to the end of April only; Rs 300) from 10am to 1pm. Its boats are bigger and rowdier (for the boozy Indian party crowd) than the *Santa Monica*.

GTDC also runs a **Goa By Night bus tour** (Rs 140; ☎ 6.30pm), which leaves from the same spot and includes a river cruise. It also offers a whole bevy of day-long bus tours.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Park Lane Lodge** (☎ 2227154; pkaldg@sancharnet.in; d without/with AC Rs 475/650; ☎) Stepping through the doors of this rambling 1930s Portuguese house is like going to visit your grandparents, thanks to all the fuss the owners pour over you. There are six small, simply furnished rooms full of character; checkout is 8am and prices more than double at Christmas.

**Vaz Residence** (☎ 2432909; d Rs 500) This decent-value budget hotel off 31st January Rd doesn't extend the warmest of welcomes, but it's in a quiet, friendly neighbourhood and has six basic, clean rooms with midget-sized balconies.

**Republica Hotel** (☎ 2224630; Jose Falcão Rd; d Rs 600) The Republica is an interesting old place with good views from the balcony over to the river and the Secretariat building. But with squat toilets and a general air of neglect it's the least appealing of the budget choices. For some reason it charges Rs 1000 in high season if you book over the phone.

**ourpick Afonso Guest House** (☎ 2222359; d Rs 750) Surrounded by pot plants and set in a beautifully restored yellow Portuguese town house that almost whiffs of Lisbon, this superb family-run budget hotel has immaculately clean, well-cared-for rooms that are a bargain.

### MIDRANGE

**Mayfair Hotel** (☎ 2223317; mayfair@sancharnet.com; Dr Dada Vaidya Rd; s/d from Rs 840/1040; ☎) Bright red-

and-yellow-striped walls lead into tidy rooms that are ideal for those who enjoy the hustle of the city centre.

**Panaji Residency** (☎ 2227103; MG Rd; d without/with AC from Rs 870/990; ☎) This GTDC-run establishment has as much charm and character as a bowl of porridge, but it's a useful standby if all the goodies are taken. Popular with Indian businessmen.

**Panjim Inn** (☎ 2226523; www.panjiminn.com; 31st January Rd; s/d from Rs 1440/1620; ☎) A delightful hotel, the Panjim Inn is a beautiful 200-year-old pastel pink mansion with period furniture and a large 1st-floor veranda with overhanging vines. All rooms have romantic four-poster beds. The attached restaurant is slow and not such good value. Note that there's a modern, new extension, so call ahead to request one of the genuinely old rooms!

**Panjim Pousada** (☎ 2226523; www.panjiminn.com; 31st January Rd; s/d from Rs 1440/1620; ☎) Across from Panjim Inn and under the same management, this is a discreet hotel hidden away inside a lovely old Hindu house. The Gitanjali art gallery around the bright central courtyard and the rooms are full of antique wooden furniture.

**Hotel Fidalgo** (☎ 2226291; www.hotelfidalgo-go.com; 18 June Rd; s/d from Rs 2000/2500; ☎) Sterile but reliable business-class hotel with huge bedroom windows overlooking the city centre and a whole bevy of 24-hour restaurants. Has an inviting pool.

### TOP END

**ourpick Panjim Peoples** (☎ 2226523; www.panjiminn.com; 31st January Rd; d high season from Rs 5200; ☎) This is another venture by the Panjim Inn people, and is far and away the most atmospheric hotel in Panaji. The bed heads alone should be in an art gallery and nothing else about the massive, beautifully furnished rooms is likely to disappoint either.

**Goa Marriott Resort** (☎ 2463333; www.marriott.com; Miramar; d from US\$250; ☎) Panaji's luxury choice – a relaxed hotel with spacious, soothingly decorated rooms – is at Miramar, 3km from the town centre. The service is perfect, the food in the various restaurants divine, but at the end of the day it lacks the character and sense of place of some of the other Panaji hotels.

## Eating

Panaji knows how to relax over a good meal and you'll find plenty of memorable places in which to enjoy Goa's famous food.

**New Café Hema** (General Bernado Guedes Rd; mains Rs 20-30; ☎ 6am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sun) This is a cheap, clean place near the municipal market serving a very good fish curry and rice (Rs 20) and cheap veg snacks for under Rs 10. Entrance is at the rear and up some stairs.

**Lourenzos** (MG Rd; mains Rs 30-100) Brand new, homy bar and restaurant near old Pato Bridge that's popular with local drivers. The owner is a highly eccentric Maradona lookalike who'll probably do his best to get you drinking. South American atmosphere with old Goan favourites.

**Viva Panjim** (☎ 2422405; 178 31st January Rd; mains Rs 50-160; ☎ 8-10.30am, 11.30am-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) A compulsory pit stop on the foreigners' Panaji circuit and for good reason – the cheap Goan and Portuguese staples are tasty and the ambience is that of small town in Portugal. There are a couple of outdoor tables and the chicken *xacuti* (spicy Goan curry made using coconut milk) is delicious.

**Sher-E-Punjab** (☎ 2227975; 1st fl, Hotel Aroma, Cunha-Rivara Rd; mains Rs 60-150) Simple and quick but reassuringly good, and once bitten no-one is too shy to return. There's also a branch on 18th June Rd.

**Hotel Venite** (☎ 2425537; 31st January Rd; mains Rs 65-110; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) With colourful graffiti covered walls and half-a-dozen tiny balconies hanging over the street this Latin-flavoured restaurant is the perfect spot to pause for one of its delicious milk shakes and a light snack.

**Zen Restaurant** (☎ 2420737; 1st fl, Padmavati Towers, 18th June Rd; mains Rs 100-200) The welcoming statement that the Chinese will eat anything with four legs but a table and anything with two wings but a plane does make you ponder what 'delicacy' might emerge from the kitchens next, but rest assured that this stylish new joint avoids anything dodgy and just sticks to praise-winning Chinese and Thai staples.

**our pick** **A Ferradura** (Horseshoe; ☎ 2431788; Ourem Rd; mains Rs 150-300) As the only true Portuguese restaurant in Panaji a good meal here can whisk you away to the banks of the Douro River. The main courses aren't for the hungry, but it's a good place for an intimate meal, and serves Portuguese wines and beers.

## Drinking

Panaji has a fair smattering of darkened bars full of hard-core feni (liquor distilled from coconut milk or cashews) drinkers, and a few pubs frequented by young Goans rather than

foreign tourists. Apart from **Hotel Venite** (31st January Rd), try **Acés Pub** (Swami Vivekanand Rd). It's a tiny, two-tier place that's like a little cocktail bar. **Gadhino Bar** (Dr Dada Vaidya Rd) is a spit-and-sawdust local bar consisting of two tables and a row of drinks bottles.

## Entertainment

**Kala Academy** (☎ 2420451; www.kalaacademy.org; Dayanand Bandodkar Marg) On the west side of the city at Campal is Goa's premier cultural centre, which features a programme of dance, theatre, music and art exhibitions throughout the year. Many shows are in Konkani, but there are occasional English-language productions.

**INOX** (☎ 2420999; tickets Rs 50-120) This multiplex cinema, which shows English-language and Indian films, is near the Kala Academy.

**Casino Goa** (☎ 2234044; ☎ dusk cruise 5.30-8pm Rs 500, dinner cruise from 7.30pm-6am Rs 1500) Aboard a small luxury ship, the MV *Caravela*, moored at the Panaji jetty, opposite Hotel Mandovi, is India's only live gaming casino – it's a fun night out, particularly if the Russian belly dancers are putting on a show. There's a smart dress code and a no-children policy.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Big boy airlines with offices in Panaji include the following:

**Air India** (☎ 2225172) Near Bal Bhavan, Campal.

**Indian Airlines** (☎ 2237826; ground fl, Dempo Bldg, Dayanand Bandodkar Marg)

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

**Sahara Airlines** (☎ 2237346; General Bernado Guedes Rd)

A prepaid taxi from the airport to Panaji is Rs 500.

### BUS

State-run bus services operate out of Panaji's **Kadamba bus stand** (☎ 2438034). Fares vary depend on the type of bus and include the following:

| Destination | Fare (Rs)    | Duration (hr) |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Bengaluru   | 400          | 14            |
| Hospet      | 177          | 9             |
| Mangalore   | 190          | 10            |
| Mumbai      | 900 (deluxe) | 12-15         |
| Mysore      | 345          | 17            |
| Pune        | 400          | 12            |

There are also services to Londa (Rs 70, three hours), where you can get a daily direct train connection to Mysore and Bengaluru, as well as services to Hubli (Rs 103, six hours) and Belgaum (Rs 85, five hours).

Many private operators have offices outside the entrance to the bus stand, with luxury and AC buses to Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hampi and other destinations. Most private interstate buses arrive and depart from a separate bus stand next to the Mandovi Bridge. **Paulo Travels** (☎ 2438531; www.paulotravels.com; 🕒 8am-9.30pm), just north of the bus stand, has nightly AC sleeper coaches to Mumbai (Rs 650, 14 to 18 hours) and Bengaluru (Rs 650, 14 hours), though these prices fluctuate – they rise from mid-December. Ordinary, non-AC buses cost Rs 350 to Mumbai and Rs 350 to Hampi. Luxury buses can also be booked through agents in Margao, Mapusa and the beach resorts, but they still depart from Panaji.

For journeys within Goa, popular routes from Panaji depart from the Kadamba bus stand and include the following:

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

**Mapusa** Frequent buses run to Mapusa (Rs 7) or there's a separate ticket booth at the Kadamba bus stand for express services (Rs 10, 25 minutes).

**Margao** Direct express buses run frequently to Margao (Rs 16, one hour). Change at Margao for the beaches of the south.

**Old Goa** Direct buses to Old Goa leave constantly (Rs 7, 25 minutes).

## TRAIN

The train is a better bet than the bus for getting to/from Mumbai and Mangalore, but it can be difficult getting a seat into Goa around Christmas. The nearest train station to Panaji is Karmali, 12km to the east near Old Goa. There's a very busy **reservation office** (🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) upstairs at Panaji's Kadamba bus stand.

## Getting Around

Getting taxi and autorickshaw drivers to use their meters is impossible. Agree on the fare before heading off. Short trips around Panaji cost Rs 50; to Old Goa they cost roughly Rs 150.

It's easy enough to rent a motorcycle or scooter in Panaji, though if you intend to spend most of your time at the beach resorts it's

more convenient and usually cheaper to hire one there. There are no hire shops as such – ask at your guesthouse or head to the cluster of bikes opposite the main post office on MG Rd. Bicycles can be hired from **Daud M Aga Cycle Store** (☎ 2222670; per day Rs 40; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, to noon Sun), opposite Cine Nacional.

## OLD GOA

Gazing at Old Goa today it's hard to believe that this fallen city was once able to stand up to Lisbon and demand, 'Who's the man?'. But back in the 1500s and with a population exceeding that of Lisbon and London, that's exactly what Old Goa was able to do. However the good times didn't last long and both the Inquisition and a major epidemic did their best to decimate this decadent and immoral dollop of Portugal. Finally, in 1843, the capital was shifted to the far more prim and proper Panaji.

All that's now left of Golden Goa are half-a-dozen imposing churches and cathedrals (among the largest in Asia) and an awful lot of atmosphere.

Old Goa can get crowded on weekends and in the 10 days leading up to the **Feast of St Francis Xavier** on 3 December. The Archaeological Survey of India publishes the useful guide *Old Goa* (Rs 10), available from the archaeological museum (p850).

## Sights

### SE CATHEDRAL

Construction of the **Sé de Santa Catarina**, the largest church in Old Goa, began in 1562 and though the building was completed by 1619, the altars were not finished until 1652.

The building's style is Portuguese-Gothic with a Tuscan exterior and Corinthian interior. The remaining tower houses a famous bell, often called the Golden Bell because of its rich sound. The main altar is dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, and paintings on either side of it depict scenes from her life and martyrdom.

### CONVENT & CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

One of the most interesting buildings in Old Goa, the **church** interior contains gilded and carved woodwork, a stunning *eredos* (ornamented screen behind the altar), old murals depicting scenes from the life of St Francis and a floor made of carved gravestones –

complete with family coats of arms dating back to the early 16th century. The church was built by eight Franciscan friars who arrived here in 1517 and constructed a small chapel, which was later pulled down and the present building was constructed on the same spot in 1661.

A convent behind this church is now the **archaeological museum** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu). It houses portraits of the Portuguese viceroys, sculpture fragments from Hindu temple sites, and stone Vetral images from the animist cult that flourished in this part of India centuries ago.

### BASILICA OF BOM JESUS

This basilica is famous throughout the Roman Catholic world. It contains the tomb and mortal remains of St Francis Xavier who, in 1541, was given the task of spreading Christianity among the subjects of the Portuguese colonies in the East.

A former pupil of St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, St Francis Xavier embarked on missionary voyages that became legendary and, considering the state

of transport at the time, were nothing short of miraculous.

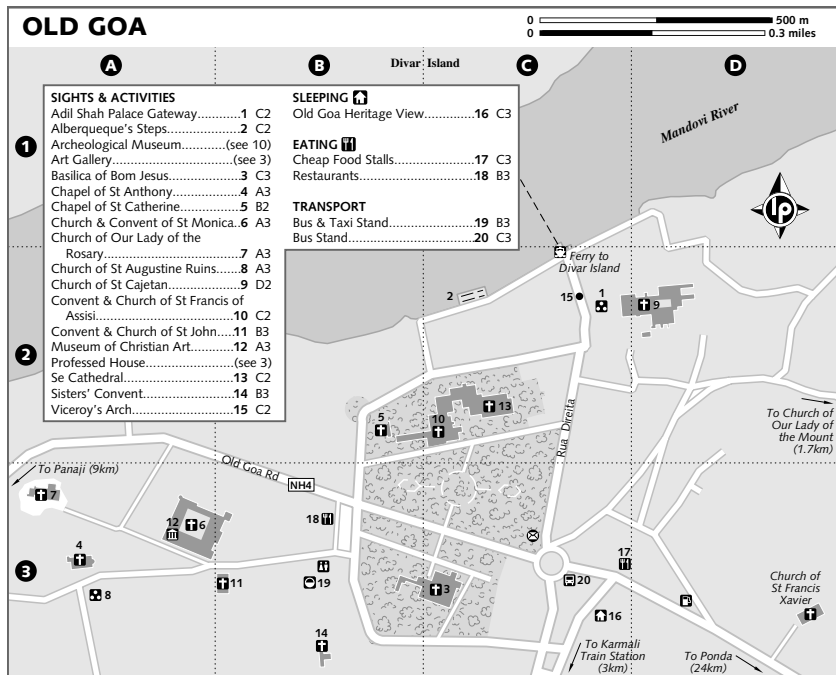
Apart from the richly gilded altars, the interior of the church is remarkable for its simplicity. Construction began in 1594 and was completed in 1605. The focus of the church is the three-tiered marble tomb of St Francis – his remains are housed in a silver casket, which at one time was covered in jewels.

The **Professed House**, next door to the basilica, is a two-storey laterite building covered with lime plaster. Construction was completed in 1585, despite much opposition to the Jesuits from the local Portuguese. There is a modern **art gallery** attached to the basilica; even if the art isn't to your taste it's worth popping your head in to look through a small window down onto the tomb of St Francis Xavier.

### CHURCH OF ST CAJETAN

Modelled on the original design of St Peter's in Rome, this **church** was built by Italian friars of the Order of Theatines, who were sent by Pope Urban III to preach Christianity in the kingdom of Golconda (near Hyderabad).

## OLD GOA





## THE INCORRUPT BODY OF ST FRANCIS XAVIER

Goa's patron saint, Francis Xavier, spent 10 years as a tireless missionary in Asia but it was his death on 3 December 1552 that gave rise to his greatest influence on the region.

He died on the island of Sancian, off the coast of China. A servant is said to have emptied four sacks of quicklime into his coffin to consume his flesh in case the order came to return the remains to Goa. Two months later the body was still in perfect condition – refusing to rot despite the quicklime. The following year it was returned to Goa, where the people were declaring the preservation a miracle.

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

It was not until 1622 that canonisation took place, but by then holy-relic hunters had started work on the 'incorrupt body'. In 1614 the right arm was removed and divided between Jesuits in Japan and Rome, and by 1636 parts of one shoulder blade and all the internal organs had been scattered through Southeast Asia. By the end of the 17th century the body was in an advanced state of desiccation, and the miracle appeared to be over. The Jesuits decided to enclose the corpse in a glass coffin out of view, and it was not until the mid-19th century that the current cycle of 10-yearly expositions began, the next one being in 2014.

The friars were not permitted to work in Golconda, so settled at Old Goa in 1640. The construction of the church began in 1655.

### CHURCH OF ST AUGUSTINE (RUINS)

The church was constructed in 1602 by Augustinian friars and abandoned in 1835 due to the repressive policies of the Portuguese government, which resulted in the eviction of many religious orders from Goa. It quickly fell into neglect and all that really remains is the enormous 46m tower that served as a belfry and formed part of the façade.

### CHURCH & CONVENT OF ST MONICA

This huge, three-storey **laterite building** was completed in 1627, only to burn down nine years later. Reconstruction started the following year, and it's from this time that the buildings date. Once known as the Royal Monastery, due to the royal patronage that it enjoyed, the building is now used by the Mater Dei Institute as a nunnery. It was inaugurated in 1964.

Within the convent, the excellent **Museum of Christian Art** (adult/child Rs 10/free; ☎ 9.30am–5pm) contains statuary, paintings and sculptures transferred here from the Rachol Seminary. Many of the works of Goan Christian art during the Portuguese era were produced by local Hindu artists.

### OTHER HISTORIC SITES

Other monuments of interest are the **Viceroy's Arch**, **Adil Shah's Palace Gateway**, **Chapel of St Anthony**, **Chapel of St Catherine**, **Albuquerque's Steps**, the **Convent & Church of St John**, **Sister's Convent** and the **Church of Our Lady of the Rosary**. For a wonderful view of the city head to the hilltop **Church of Our Lady of the Mount**, 2km east of Se Cathedral.

### Sleeping & Eating

Most people visit Old Goa as a day trip and there is little reason to stay out here, but should you want to the GTDC **Old Goa Heritage View** (☎ 2285013; d with/without AC Rs 450/650; ♿), has simple rooms and zero enthusiasm.

Outside the basilica there are two restaurants, geared primarily to local tourists, where you can order full meals and cold drinks, including beer. They're raised up from the road and are a good spot to relax and take in the scene. You can also get cheap snacks (less than Rs 120) from the food stalls that line the road just north of the Old Goa Heritage View.

### Getting There & Away

Frequent buses to Old Goa depart from the Kadamba bus stand at Panaji (Rs 7, 25 minutes) and stop on the east side of the main roundabout.



## TORDA

Just 5km north of Panaji, off the main road to Mapusa, is the village of Torda, where you'll find, on a traffic island, the **Houses of Goa Museum** (☎ 2410711; www.archgoa.org; admission Rs 25; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Tue-Sun). This extraordinary ship-like building houses a small but illuminating collection of materials explaining the unique design and intricacies of Goa's traditional architecture. Inquire also about guided walks through the mangroves surrounding the village. The easiest way here is by autorickshaw from Panaji (around Rs 70).

## MAPUSA

pop 40,100

The colourful market town of Mapusa (pronounced 'Mapsa') is the main population centre in the northern *talukas* (districts) of Goa. There's not much to see in Mapusa, aside from a raucous **Friday market** (🕒 8am-6.30pm) that attracts hordes of vendors and shoppers from all over Goa. Unlike the Anjuna market it's a local event where people shop for cheap clothing and produce, but you can also find a few souvenirs and textiles here. If your idea of India has yet to extend beyond the beach bubbles then this is a great place to see an authentic slice of small-town India.

## Information

Several ATMs can be found around the municipal gardens.

**Cyber Zone** (per hr Rs 40; 🕒 9.30am-2pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Internet access, just around the corner from the Hotel Satyaheera.

**Other India Bookstore** (☎ 2263306; www.goacomm.com/oib; Mapusa Clinic Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Stocks mainly books published in India, including books on Goa or by Goan authors.

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation at the nearby beaches of Anjuna, Vagator and Calangute is far preferable to what's on offer in Mapusa.

**Hotel Vilena** (☎ 2263115; Feira Baixa Rd; d with shared/private bathroom Rs 300/450) Noisy, match-box-sized rooms that just about suffice for a night. Friendly.

**Hotel Satyaheera** (☎ 2262849; satya\_goa@sanchamnet.in; d without/with AC from Rs 490/700; 🍷) Near the Maruti Temple on the northern roundabout, this is Mapusa's best choice with all the rooms painted a different colour – ask for one of the garish purple rooms just for the novelty value.

**Vrundavan** (dishes Rs 15-50) Near the Municipal Gardens, this is a simple place offering good, cheap veg thalis for Rs 40.

**Bertsy Bar & Restaurant** (Market Rd) Basic chicken and beef curries for Rs 30 to 50.

**Ruchira Restaurant** (mains Rs 30-100) On the rooftop of Hotel Satyaheera, this is one of Mapusa's best restaurants, serving Indian and Continental dishes.

## Shopping

**Sawant Chapple Shop** (🕒 7am-8pm) For three generations the same family have been churning out handmade leather sandals. Expect to pay between Rs 300 and 600 for a decent pair. It's behind Laxmi Narayan Temple.

## Getting There & Away

If you're coming by bus from Mumbai, Mapusa is the jumping-off point for the northern beaches. Private operators such as **India Travel** (☎ 2262635) congregate around the municipal gardens and the taxi and autorickshaw stand. They have buses to Mumbai (normal/sleeper Rs 450/800, 14 hours) and Bengaluru (Rs 500, 15 hours). From the Kadamba bus stand there are state-run buses to Pune (Rs 230, 15 hours) and Belgaum (Rs 47, five hours).

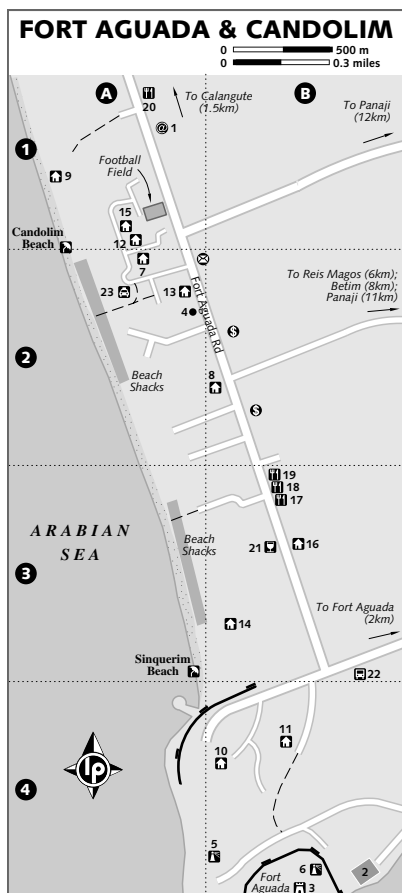
There are frequent local express buses to Panaji (Rs 7, 25 minutes), and buses every 30 minutes to Calangute and Anjuna (both Rs 6). Other buses go to Chapora, Candolim and Arambol (Rs 12). A motorcycle taxi to Anjuna or Calangute costs Rs 80, an autorickshaw Rs 120.

Thivim, about 12km northeast of town, is the nearest train station on the Konkan Railway. Local buses meet trains (Rs 5); an autorickshaw costs around Rs 80.

## FORT AGUADA & CANDOLIM

pop 8600

The beaches of Candolim and Sinquerim (below Fort Aguada) are popular with charter and upmarket tourists. The pace is a little less frenetic than at Calangute and Baga up the coast. Independent travellers are rare here, most of the hotels being favoured by package-tour operations. The beach at Fort Aguada is notable for its rocky and attractive headland, while Candolim has the rusting hulk of a grounded tanker, the *River Princess* – it's not a very pretty princess. Some of the best-value beach accommodation in Goa lies in the quiet back lanes of both villages.



The post office and banks are located on Fort Aguada Rd, and internet access is available at **Online World** (per hr Rs 30; ☎ 9am-11pm).

## Sights & Activities

Guarding the mouth of the Mandovi River, **Fort Aguada** was constructed by the Portuguese in 1612. It's worth visiting the moated ruins on the hilltop for the views, which are particularly good from the **old lighthouse**. Nearby is the **new lighthouse** (adult/child Rs 5/3; ☎ 4-5.30pm). It's a pleasant 2km ride along a hilly, sealed road to the fort, or you can walk via a steep, uphill path past Marbella Guest House. Beneath the fort, facing the Mandovi, is the **Aguada Jail**. Most of the inmates here (including some tourists on compul-

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sory, extended stays) are in on drug charges. Needless to say, it's not really much of tourist destination.

There are various boat cruises on offer. The best value are **John's Boat Tours** (☎ 2497450), further up behind Candolim Beach. The half-day dolphin trip (Rs 795, with a no-dolphin, no-pay guarantee) includes lunch and beers on the boat; the popular full-day 'Crocodile Dundee' river trip (Rs 995) includes lunch at a spice plantation and free drinks. It also offers an overnight backwater trip on a Kerala-style houseboat (Rs 4000 full board), and a variety of nonwatery trips.

The Taj Holiday Village (p856) organises paragliding and rents jet-skis and windsurfing equipment.

## Sleeping BUDGET

Some of Goa's best-value places to put up for the night can be found in Fort Aguada and Candolim.

**Ave Maria** (☎ 2489074; d incl tax Rs 600; 🚻) A hop and a skip from the beach but you need to be skinny to squeeze into the shower. Friendly.

## THE BEACH FILES

Goa's biggest attraction is its beaches. The beaches themselves, the associated villages and resorts that have grown up around them, and the people who are drawn to them are all quite different in character. Some have changed beyond recognition in the past 10 years, others are just being discovered and a few pockets remain unspoiled. Here's a brief rundown of Goa's main beaches from north to south.

### Arambol (Harmal)

The most northerly of Goa's developed beaches, Arambol (p866) has an attractive rocky headland, a long strip of sand and a chilled-out, but increasingly busy, scene with music bars and some good restaurants; it attracts backpackers and gracefully ageing hippies. It has some of the cheapest accommodation in Goa and lots of long timers.

### Mandrem

The next beach south, Mandrem (p866) is one huge palm backed ribbon of clean and uncluttered sand; it's one of Goa's undiscovered gems. It's good for midrange travellers looking to kick back and do absolutely nothing.

### Morjim & Asvem

Stretching down to the Chapora River, the sandy beaches here (p866) are some of the least disturbed and most beautiful in the state. The waters at Morjim suffer heavily from river run-off pollution year-round. There are bamboo and palm-thatch huts, an upmarket tent camp and a few beach shacks but essentially it's a quiet place to do nothing.

### Vagator

There are three small cove beaches at Vagator (p863) backed by a rocky headland. The attraction of Vagator is the huge party scene, dominated by Europeans and Israelis, rather than beaches, which cannot be described as Goa's prettiest. The water is often murky thanks to river run-off.

### Anjuna

Of all the big tourist beaches Anjuna (p861) has, close to the flea market, the most alluring and relaxed stretch of sand. There are also plenty of places to stay and a number of good eating and drinking options. Anjuna retains its popularity with the party crowd but its days as the place to 'see and be seen' are virtually over. Market day (Wednesday), however, should not be missed.

### Calangute & Baga

The long sweep of very crowded beach here (p856) is overloaded with beach shacks and sun beds, backed by midrange concrete-block hotels. This is package-tourism central, though many travellers still prefer the upbeat atmosphere here to that further north. The beach can be dirty and women in bikinis won't get a second's peace.

**Tropicano Beach Resort** (☎ 2489732; 835B Camotim Vaddo; d Rs 600) Six small freshly painted rooms that are as clean as Goa gets, a garden full of drooping trees and a friendly family welcome make the Tropicano Beach Resort a hard place to top.

**Villa Ludovici Tourist Home** (☎ 2479684; Fort Aguada Rd; d incl breakfast Rs 650) Nowhere else in Candolim can match the fading glory of this charming old colonial house. There are only four rooms, some of which come with creak-

ing four-posters, so book in advance. In the evenings you can sit yourself in a comfortable chair on the shady verandah and sup on a beer.

**D'Mello's** (☎ 2489650; dmellos\_seaview\_home@hotmail.com; d small/large Rs 700/1200) The large ocean-facing rooms are some of the best you will find anywhere and feature enormous sliding wooden shutters instead of glass windows. The result is lots of breezes and sunlight filtering into the room and the sensation that

### Candolim & Sinquerim

A continuation of Calangute, Candolim (p852) is a mix of upmarket resorts, package hotels, beach shacks and some good restaurants, culminating in the sprawling Taj complex at Sinquerim. Though still busy this beach is likely to come closer to your Goa ideals.

### Miramar

Miramar (p846), Panaji's the town beach of Panaji (Panjim), is no place for swimming but it's a popular spot from which to watch the sunset.

### Bogmalo

A small and sheltered beach hemmed in by coconut cliffs that sits just 4km south of Dabolim Airport, Bogmalo (p871) has a feeling of exclusivity and can be used as a base for diving. It's close to the sprawling industrial centre of Vasco da Gama and accessed easily from the airport. Very few people come here.

### Majorda & Velsao

Blighted by a petrochemical plant in the distance, these beaches north of Colva have a few upmarket resort hotels but little tourist activity.

### Colva & Benaulim

The exposed and endless sandy beach here (p872) is similar to Calangute but it's much quieter and still has a noticeable fishing industry. There's a mix of Indian and foreign package tourists and backpackers, but no party scene. Benaulim village is quieter still and a good place to stay long-term. Neither beach is very clean.

### Varca & Cavelossim

Five-star luxury resorts here (p875) front relatively empty, undeveloped beaches that meet all the tropical clichés.

### Agonda

North of Palolem, the large beach at Agonda (p875) is the most inviting in south Goa. It attracts travellers who are over the scene at Palolem.

### Palolem & Patnem

Palolem (p875) used to be the quietest and most idyllic beach in the state but nowadays it's been well and truly discovered. Even so its palm trees continue to attract bus loads of backpackers attempting to escape the stresses of Indian travel. Patnem, a short distance south, is much cleaner, quieter and has some decent surf.

you're floating out on the ocean in a boat. The cheaper rooms are also good.

### MIDRANGE

**Sea Shell Inn** (☎ 2489131; seashellgoa@hotmail.com; Fort Aguada Rd; d incl breakfast Rs 850) On the main road, this whitewashed grand colonial house has eight rooms situated in a newer annexe round the back. Good value. Skimpy breakfast.

**Casa Sea-Shell** (☎ 2479879; seashellgoa@hotmail.com; Fort Aguada Rd; d Rs 950; 📍) The larger and

more modern sister of the Sea Shell lacks the character of that establishment but does have the plus of a pool.

**Moonlight Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 2489249; santa natheresa@yahoo.com; d from Rs 1000) Tasteful blue-and-white building with large rooms full of wicker furniture and bathrooms so big you'll need a GPS to navigate around them. Should the tropical sun be making you feel a bit wintry, try the attached restaurant that serves up Sunday roasts.

**our pick** **Marbella Guest House** (☎ 2479551; marbella\_goa@yahoo.com; d incl tax from Rs 1500; 🏠) This stunningly renovated Portuguese villa, stuffed full of period furniture and with peaceful, shady gardens, might be the most romantic guesthouse in Goa and alone is reason enough to come to Fort Aguada. Each room is full of lots of little touches that hotels many times its price cannot match. Book ahead.

### TOP END

The **Taj Group** (☎ 6645858; www.tajhotels.com) operates a complex of three luxury hotels beside Sinquerim Beach:

**Taj Holiday Village** (d from US\$180; 🏠 📺 🚿) Terracotta roofed cottages, a small putting green and a wonderful pool, but little character.

**Aguada Hermitage** (s/d from US\$295; 🏠 📺 🚿) Originally built to house Commonwealth heads of state this is the most alluring of the three hotels.

**Fort Aguada Beach Resort** (s & d from US\$325; 🏠 📺 🚿) Built into the outer walls of the fort and with epic sea views.

### Eating

**Viva Goa** (Fort Aguada Rd; mains Rs 40-110; 🕒 11am-midnight) This cheap, locals-only spot serves seafood so fresh it might just swim away.

**Bomra's Restaurant** (☎ 2106236; Fort Aguada Rd; mains Rs 80-170) For a change from the soggy pastas and identikit curries that many places slop onto your plate try this small new Burmese restaurant.

**Stone House** (☎ 2479909; Fort Aguada Rd; mains Rs 90-170) A mellow soundtrack makes you want to linger in the comfy wicker chairs while choosing from an extensive all cast menu.

**Flambé** (☎ 26114271; Fort Aguada Rd; mains Rs 100-150; 🕒 8am-midnight) A melange of French and Indian cuisine and a great range of kebabs make for a real change from the everyday menus of many other establishments. It's also one of the few places that's open for service all day.

Down on the beach are dozens of beach shacks serving the obligatory Western breakfasts, seafood and cold drinks.

### Drinking

**Riio** (☎ 5649504; Fort Aguada Rd; 🕒 10.30am-4am) Formerly known as 10 Downing Street, the Riio has jazzed itself up and is now Candolim's hippest bar.

### Getting There & Away

Buses run from Panaji (Rs 7, 45 minutes), Mapusa (Rs 6) or Betim to Sinquerim via the Calangute-Candolim road. There are frequent buses travelling between Sinquerim and Calangute (Rs 3). A prepaid taxi from Daoblim Airport to Candolim costs Rs 550.

### CALANGUTE & BAGA

pop 15,800

Calangute and Baga were the first beaches to attract hippies travelling overland in the '60s, then the first to secure the rampant package-and charter-tourist market in the '90s. Today they are India's 'kiss me quick' hat capital and the most popular beach resorts in the country with holidaying Indians. For many people it's just a busy, noisy and tacky Indian Costa del Sol and the thought of spending a single night here is enough to make them shudder. For others, the very fact that it is so alien to anything else in India is an attraction in itself, there's certainly no denying that the town has a certain character to it and, if you're searching for a glimpse of how the much-hyped 'New India' holidays, then here she is in all her glory.

Calangute is more of a bucket-and-spade family holiday destination while Baga, up near the mouth of the river, is popular with those wanting to drink, dance and get rowdy. For something a bit more chilled out take a room at the southern end of Calangute, towards Candolim, or among the last remaining patches of greenery on the north side of the Baga River.

### Orientation & Information

Most services cluster around the main market and bus stand, from where a road leads down to the beach.

There are many currency-exchange offices scattered around the town that will change cash or travellers cheques, and most give cash advances on Visa and MasterCard. There are 24-hour ATMs accepting foreign cards at the ICICI and UTI banks in the market, and Centurion Bank, about 100m south on the main road.

There are plenty of internet cafés and many hotels offer internet access for guests. The standard charge is Rs 30 an hour. In the market area try Edson's Cyber Café; in Baga try the internet café at Angelina Beach Resort (p859).

**Book Palace** (☎ 2281129; 🕒 9am-7pm) Next to the football ground on the road to the beach, Book Palace has

a good selection of reading material in all languages held by a man who loves his products.

**Literati Bookshop & Café** (☎ 2277740; www.literati-goa.com) Tucked away down a dusty lane leading to the beach at the far southern end of Calangute is this refreshingly different bookshop. Piles of good reads are stacked onto shelves throughout the owners' home, and there are bean bags to relax on and coffee to wake up with.

**MGM International Travels** (☎ 2276249; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) This is a reputable travel agency.

## Sights & Activities

Water sports, including parasailing (Rs 700 to 1500), jet-skiing (Rs 900 per 15 minutes), and boat trips are offered about halfway along the beach between Calangute and Baga by **Altantis Water Sports** (☎ 9890047272) and **H2O Tripper** (☎ 2277907).

The **Ayurvedic Natural Health Centre** (☎ 2409275; www.healthandayurveda.com; Chogm Rd, Saligao), 5km inland, offers a range of residential packages (one week single/double US\$492/874) that include accommodation and courses, in reflexology, aromatherapy, acupressure and yoga. There's also a range of herbal medicines on offer and a free consultation by a Keralan doctor.

Diving trips and courses are offered by the German-run **Goa Dive Center** (☎ 9822157094; goadivecenter@rediffmail.com; Tito's Rd, Baga; 4-day PADI beginners course Rs 14,500; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-9pm).

There are two Saturday-night markets in the Baga area that are alternatives to the Anjuna Market; for details p861.

If you're after something a little more laid-back, the **Kerkar Art Complex** (☎ 2276017; www.subodhkerkar.com; ☎ 10am-11pm) showcases the colourful paintings and sculptures of local artist Dr Subodh Kerkar; here you'll also find a restaurant (p860), hotel (p859) and an open-air auditorium where classical Indian music concerts are held.

If you're staying awhile and want to rekindle the hippy days by not just playing a guitar around the fire but actually building one yourself (the guitar that is, not the fire), then you can learn how to do it with a tailor-made course from **Jungle Guitars** (☎ 9823565117; www.jungleguitars.com; Rs 38,000) based on the north side of the Baga River.

It's not really a sight or activity in the standard sense but stopping by **Star Magic Shop** (☎ 09810483939; Tito's Rd; ☎ 9am-11pm) makes for an entertaining half-hour for the child in all of

us. The magician owner will dazzle you with an array of magic that extends way beyond the average pub card trick – just don't accept the use of one of his lighters! Pay enough and he'll show you the tricks of the trade.

## Tours

**Day Tripper** (☎ 2276726; www.daytrippergoa.com; ☎ 9am-6pm end Oct-end Apr), with its head office in south Calangute, is one of Goa's best tour agencies. It runs a wide variety of trips around Goa, including to Dudhsagar Falls (p878), and also interstate to Hampi and the Kali River (for rafting and bird-watching trips) in Karnataka.

GTDC tours (see p847) can be booked at the **Calangute Residency** (☎ 2276024) beside the beach.

## Sleeping

It's a solid line of hotels for about 3km along the main Calangute-Baga road and along lanes between the road and the beach, but few places actually have sea views.

## CALANGUTE

### Budget

South Calangute is generally quieter and more rustic than further north. In central Calangute there are several good places down Golden Beach Rd, a laneway that runs parallel to the beach.

**Johnny's Hotel** (☎ 2277458; johnnys\_hotel@yahoo.com; d small/large Rs 400/600) Well-established backpackers hotel close to the beach. There's a variety of big, neat rooms, along with rooftop yoga (Rs 250 per hour) and massage (Rs 500 per hour) sessions.

**Gabriel's Guest House** (☎ 2279486; d from Rs 500; ☎) Halfway down a laneway at the southern end of the beach, Gabriel's is a pleasant family home with crazy mosaic floors and simple, spotless rooms (one with AC) with balconies. There is a simple restaurant.

**Angela Guest House** (Golden Beach Rd; Rs r 550) It's hard to know which has more character – the Portuguese villa itself or the frail old gentleman who runs it. The four basic rooms are about the cheapest in town. A friendly attached restaurant offers no-fuss meals.

**Garden Court Resort** (☎ 2276054; r without/with AC Rs 600/1200; ☎) In the thick of things at the roundabout at the start of the Calangute-Baga road is this lovely colonial building full of Catholic religious mementos. The rooms are





large and clean and the old couple in charge are very welcoming.

**Coco Banana** (☎ 2279068; www.cocobananagoa.com; d Rs 1200) Walter and Marina, the Goan-Swiss couple who run this tight ship, will regale you with their life history and stories of how Goa used to be. They'll love having you to stay, but only so long as you obey the (only partially joking) signs not to have sex in the bathrooms! It's often full so book ahead, and the price rises over the Christmas period.

### Midrange & Top End

**Mascarenhas Bungalow** (☎ 2276375, 9822989825; d Rs 800-1500) Superbly situated just a minute's walk from the beach, this earthy Portuguese house (built in 1901) is run by an easygoing mother-and-son team, Venita and Neil. Set amid whispering coconut trees, there are three unpretentious 'cottages', two of which are like apartments (each with small kitchens) – the upstairs one has a glorious sea-view terrace. Weekly/monthly rates are possible. Jerry and Gina, the pet pooches, love a good back scratch.

**Hotel Golden Eye** (☎ 2277308; www.hotelgoldeneye.com; d without/with AC Rs 1000/1500; ☎) If you can overlook the slightly cold and forlorn atmosphere, this place offers great-value apartment-style rooms just a few sandy footsteps from a quieter patch of beach.

**Kerkar Retreat** (☎ 2276017; www.subodhkerkar.com; d without/with AC Rs 2000/2500; ☎) If you liked the art then why not live with it for a while? This hotel, located inside the Kerkar Art Complex, could be really memorable but sadly it's a little bit overpriced.

### BAGA

#### Budget

**Angelina Beach Resort** (☎ 2279145; angelina-beachresort@rediffmail.com; d without/with AC Rs 550/700; ☎) A large, family-run place with neatly tiled bathrooms and rooms so clean you could eat your dinner off the floor. Well cared for and very welcoming.

**Noons Guest House** (☎ 2282787; Calangute-Baga Rd; d Rs 600) Set back from the noisy main drag this superb-value guesthouse ran by Maurice is only open in the high season. The nine large rooms come with balconies overlooking the garden. The main house is a century-old Portuguese villa with a guardian soldier statue above the entrance. Guests' rooms are in the modern annexe round the back.

**Nani's Bar & Rani's Restaurant** (☎ 2276313; r Rs 800-1000) Situated on the tranquil north side of the Baga River, but just a short step from the sandy beach and within sight of all the action Nani's might well have the prime spot in Baga. As if this weren't enough the colonial house is a real gem, with simple and sufficient rooms.

**Divine Guest House** (☎ 2279546; www.indivinehome.com; d Rs 800, ste Rs 1200) In a beautiful, quiet riverside location this bright red-and-white building with statues of cockerels and herons all over the roof offers clean rooms that are often full. The suites are really good value.

### Midrange & Top End

**Alidia Beach Cottages** (☎ 2279014; alidia@rediffmail.com; d from Rs 800, ste Rs 2500; ☎) Set back behind the whitewashed church, this old-fashioned house has a lost-in-the-jungle feel to it thanks to thousands of enveloping tropical flowers. It's especially good value in the low season.

**Hotel Linda Goa** (☎ 2276066; www.hotelindagoa.com; d without/with AC Rs 2100/2600; ☎) A completely nondescript hotel frequented by package tours. It's overpriced but the pool (nonresidents Rs 50) is good.

**Nilaya Hermitage** (☎ 2276793; www.nilayahermitage.com; d incl breakfast & dinner from US\$375; ☎) The last word in Goan luxury and, with only 10 rooms, the best chance you'll ever have of sleeping in the same bed as former guest Kate Moss (or, if you prefer, Richard Gere). This is one of those ever-so-exclusive places that most of us are far too ugly, wrinkled and, yes OK, poor to ever be allowed anywhere near. Rates include Dabolim Airport transfers. Please note – Kate or Richard may not actually be in the bed with you at the time.

### Eating

Calangute and Baga boast some of the best dining in Goa. There are literally hundreds of small restaurants bringing the tastes of the world to the streets of Goa. For the cheapest eats check out the string of food stalls selling juices, omelettes and curries that appear each evening beside the football field in Calangute.

In the thick of Calangute is the Menezes supermarket, which is a good bet for self-caterers.

### CALANGUTE

**Infanteria Pastry Shop** (Rs 50-100; ☎) 7.30am-midnight) Next to the Sao João Batista church is this scrummy bakery with homemade cakes just

like your mum makes. Also has light snacks and seafood meals. It's normally packed out for breakfast.

**Plantain Leaf** (mains Rs 50-100) Catering more to the domestic tourism market this is the best Indian vegetarian restaurant around, but it feels a bit like eating in a school canteen.

**Kaya** (Golden Beach Rd; mains Rs 50-180) The tie-dyed '60s keep rocking in this tiny hippy-flavoured Japanese restaurant. Includes such delights as fried chicken and *okonomiyaki* (a kind of spicy pancake), all of which are cooked up by chefs who are the real deal.

**Rock Café** (☎ 2282015; Almita 3; mains Rs 80-150) One of the hot spots of the moment that's very popular with expats on account of its speedy service and endless range of goodies from home. It seems to be something of a magnet to all manner of weird and wonderful characters.

**Sunshine** (mains Rs 80-200) A cute sand-floored, family-run beachside restaurant with chequer tablecloths and tasty seafood.

**Hotel Souza Lobo** (☎ 2276463; most mains Rs 80-200) The sunset views, cocktails (Rs 120 to 180) and seafood, including mussels (Rs 90) and oysters (Rs 120), are impossible to beat.

**Tibetan Kitchen** (☎ 2275744; mains Rs 120) If you've never tried *momos* (Tibetan dumplings) or Tibetan tea (it's an acquired taste) then now's your chance to sample the food of the mountain kingdom without altitude sickness. Tucked off the main beach road.

**Waves** (☎ 2276017; mains Rs 120-280) Surrounded by the art of the Kerkar Art Complex, this relaxed restaurant-bar has high-quality Goan and Western dishes at slightly inflated prices.

## BAGA

**Britto's** (mains Rs 50-150; ☎ 8am-midnight) Long-running and stylish restaurant that explodes out onto the beach. There's good Goan and Continental foods, appealing cakes and desserts, and live music Monday and Thursday nights.

**Lila Café** (☎ 2279843; mains Rs 50-180; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm) Run by longtime German residents of Goa, the Lila Café offers superb breakfasts (Rs 20 to 100) that some might be tempted to call the best in the state. This relaxed café ain't a bad spot for lunch either.

**La Fontana** (☎ 275027; Tito's Rd; 3-course menu Rs 250; ☎ 7-11pm) This place has chatty waiters and tasty food with a Euro twist. There are some less common additions to the menu such as

stuffed potato skins. The cheesy music selection is truly dire.

**Citrus** (Tito's Rd; mains Rs 150-250; ☎ 6-11pm) Near Tito's, this trendy vegetarian restaurant is one of the best in Baga and features an exciting menu of innovative fusion food. Book a table in advance.

**J&A's Little Italy** (☎ 2282364; mains Rs 180-285) Sick of botched pastas and pathetic pizzas? J&A's will set your world to right with its authentic Italian cuisine which includes all those little extras, such as decent olive oil and real Parmesan, that get overlooked by more run-of-the-mill establishments.

**Fiesta** (☎ 2279894; Tito's Rd; mains Rs 200-295; ☎ 7pm-midnight Wed-Mon) There's a magical Balearic feel to the alfresco Fiesta, opposite the club Tito's, with its soft lighting, view to the beach and silvery silk-wrapped menus. The food is excellent, but at the end of the day you're here for the glamour as much as the taste.

## Drinking & Entertainment

If you thought Calangute and Baga by day weren't what you came to India for, then just wait until the sun goes down. While Calangute, with its early-to-bed attitude, is pretty sedate after dark, Baga is something else altogether – money talks here and Baga is loud, brash, pretentious and undeniably fascinating.

**Tito's** (☎ 2275028; www.titosgoa.com; Tito's Rd; club cover charge men/man with a woman Rs 500/300, women free; ☎ 6pm-3am) Possibly the most famous club in India, but since it has reached middle age it has lost a lot of its coolness and, though the hard-drinking Kingfisher lads from Mumbai aren't as welcome now, it's still got a testosterone atmosphere: single women will be harassed mercilessly.

**Club Cubana** (☎ 2279799; www.clubcubana.net; women/men Rs free/499; ☎ 9pm-4am Fri-Sun; 🍷) Aiming for a more cosmopolitan crowd than Tito's this stylish out-of-town club likes hip-hop and R&B and has an open-air pool.

**Mambos** (☎ 2279895; before/after 10pm free/Rs 200) Under the same management as Tito's and right beside the beach, this is the hottest ticket of the moment with the beautiful of Bollywood. A busy night in season is the polar opposite of many people's idea of India.

## Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to Panaji (Rs 7, 45 minutes) and Mapusa (Rs 6) from the bus

stand near the beach. Some services also stop at the bus stop near the temple. A taxi from Calangute or Baga to Panaji costs Rs 150 to 200 and takes about 30 minutes. A prepaid taxi from Dabolim Airport to Calangute will set you back Rs 550.

## ANJUNA

Famous throughout Goa for its Wednesday flea market (see the boxed text, below), Anjuna's name still pulls in backpackers, European ravers, long-term hippies and, increasingly, midrange tourists taking advantage of comfy new hotels. Of all the more developed beaches in Goa Anjuna's is the best.

### Orientation & Information

There are three distinct areas: the main crossroads and bus stand, where paths lead down to the beach; the back part of the village, where you'll find the post office and convenience stores; and the flea market area a couple of kilometres to the south.

Internet access is available at a number of places, including the Manali Guest House (right) and Villa Anjuna (p862), both Rs 40 per hour.

The **Bank of Baroda** (🕒 9.30am-2.30pm) gives cash advances on Visa and MasterCard. There are no ATMs; the closest are in Baga.

Travel agencies where you can make onward travel bookings, get flights confirmed and change foreign currency include **MGM Travels** (☎ 2274317; Anjuna-Mapusa Rd; 🕒 9.30am-6pm

Mon-Sat) and **Quick Travels** (☎ 2273477; Manali Guest House; 🕒 9am-9pm).

### Activities

The long-established **Purple Valley Yoga Centre** (www.yogagoa.com; Hotel Bougainvillea) offers a variety of drop-in classes in Asthanga, hatha and pranayama yoga, as well as meditation, from November to April. It also runs longer residential courses at its retreat in Assagao, 3km east towards Margao.

**Paragliding** takes place off the headland at the southern end of the beach, but usually only on market day.

### Sleeping

Many restaurants and family homes have a few rooms out the back, so ask around and look for 'To Let' signs – there are plenty along the back lanes leading to the flea market. If you arrive before about 15 December you should easily be able to find a place for long-term rent.

### BUDGET

**Manali Guest House** (☎ 2274421; manalionline@siffy.com; s/d Rs 150/200; 📠) A classic backpackers hotel with simple, good-value rooms (often full), a bookshop and a travel agency. The disadvantage is the distance from the beach.

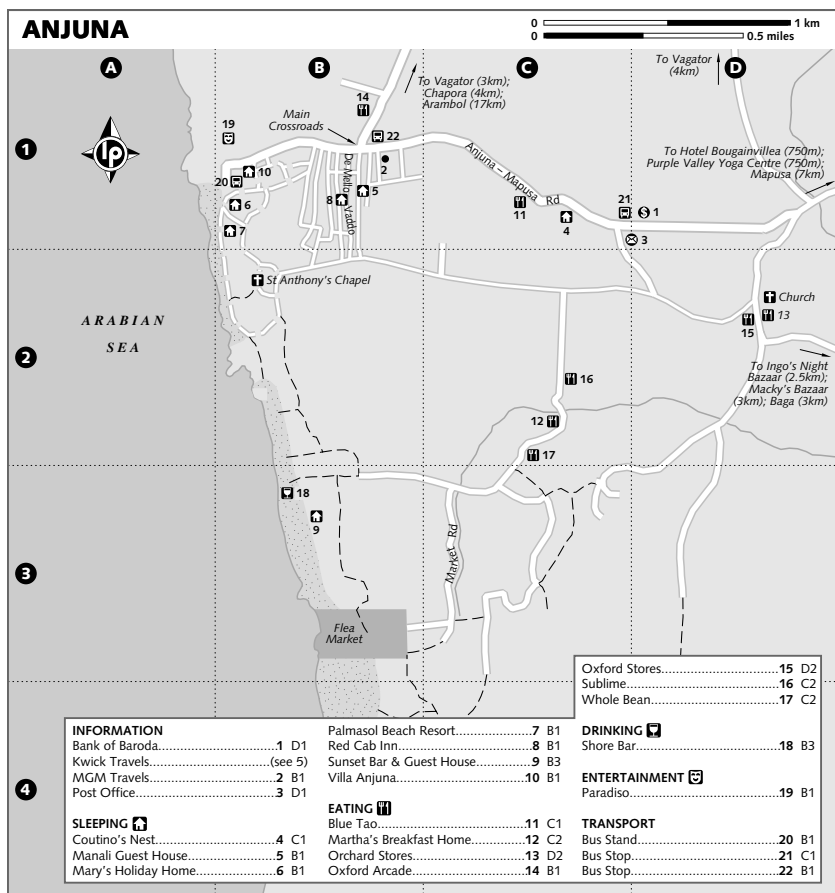
**Coutino's Nest** (☎ 2274386; shaldon\_555@yahoo.com; d Rs 300; 🍷) Jungle green with a garden to match, this place features six clean rooms and a pleasant rooftop restaurant hidden well away from the bustle.

### THE GOA MARKET EXPERIENCE

The ever-expanding Wednesday **flea market** at Anjuna is not just a place to browse for souvenirs – it's an essential part of the Goa experience! The famous market is a wonderful blend of Tibetan and Kashmiri traders, colourful Gujarati and Lamani tribal women, blissed-out hippies and travellers from all over the world. Whatever you need, from a used paperback novel to a tattoo you'll find it here – along with an endless jumble of stalls selling jewellery, carvings, T-shirts, sarongs, chillums and spices. Bargain hard to get a reasonable deal as the traders are wise to unsavvy tourists and start high with their prices.

There's lots of good Indian and Western food, as well as a couple of bars, and when it all gets too much you can wander down to the beach. The best time to visit is early morning (it starts about 8am) or late afternoon (from about 4pm); the latter is good if you plan to stay on for the sunset and party at the Shore Bar (p863).

Anjuna's market can be a bit overwhelming and very hot. For something more relaxing try one of the Saturday-night markets near Baga, where the emphasis is as much on entertainment and food stalls as it is on the usual collection of handicraft, jewellery and clothing stalls. **Ingo's Night Bazaar**, on Arpora Hill, halfway between Baga and Anjuna, is well organised and has a good mix of Indian and Western stalls. **Macky's Bazaar**, on the Baga River, is a smaller Goan-run affair. Both run from around 6pm to midnight.



**Red Cab Inn** (☎ 2274427; redcabinn@rediffmail.com; De Mello Vaddo; d Rs 400-700) It's a bit gloomy, but the split level mezzanine rooms offer top value for your rupees if travelling in a family group. Meanwhile couples wishing to start a family might find the romantic domed room studded with a galaxy of blue lights helpful!

**Sunset Bar & Guesthouse** (☎ 2273917; d Rs 500) The rooms here are nothing special, but the location certainly is. Well away from the noise of town and sitting right on the most relaxing of Goa's major tourist beaches, this is the perfect place for beach bums.

**Mary's Holiday Home** (☎ 5613118; junjim@sify.com; d Rs 600) Standing proudly on the cliffs above the sea this is an excellent and therefore frequently full backpackers hotel with help-

ful management who know everyone and everything.

**Palmasol Beach Resort** (☎ 273258; d Rs 600) Some of the tidiest budget rooms in town with friendly owners and plenty of opportunities to kick back in a hammock.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Villa Anjuna** (☎ 2273443; www.anjunavilla.com; d Rs 650-1000; 🚗 📺 📺) In a prime location on the main road to the beach is this friendly hotel which has comfortable rooms arranged around a pool (open to nonguests for Rs 200). One of the better-value midrange hotels, it's often full.

**Hotel Bougainvillea** (☎ 273270; granpas@hotmail.com; d/ste incl breakfast & tax from Rs 1400/1800;

☎ ☎ ☎) Also known as Granpa's Inn, this could be described as a 'budget heritage hotel' and it certainly offers value for money. An old-fashioned hotel with comfortable rooms, billiard tables in the bar and hidden tables for apéritifs in the garden. Home of the Purple Valley Yoga Centre (p861).

## Eating

Anjuna has some great places to eat that range from the cheap and cheerful beach shacks at the southern end (near the flea-market site) to a handful of seafood restaurants overlooking the beach, and, best of all, some refreshingly unusual places back in the village.

**Whole Bean** (☎ 273952; Rs 50-100) Simple, tasty health-food café that focuses on tofu-based meals.

**Martha's Breakfast Home** (breakfast Rs 50-120) This is a great place to start the day, with delicious pancakes, omelettes, fresh bread and various juices, served in a pleasant, shady garden or on the veranda. There are also rooms to rent.

**Blue Tao** (mains Rs 60-160) Organic delights emerge from the spick-and-span kitchen of a restaurant that's highly regarded by locals.

**Sublime** (☎ 982248405; mains Rs 150) One of the most appropriately named restaurants in Anjuna; the food in this newly opened garden restaurant is prepared by a New York-trained chef, Chris, and includes such rare finds as blue-cheese burgers.

The retail needs of the expat community are served by Oxford Stores and Orchard Stores, opposite each other back in the village, and the Oxford Arcade, closer to the beach. Here you can get everything from a loaf of bread to Vegemite and imported cheese.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**Shore Bar** (☎ 7.30am-midnight) Not as popular as it once was, but market day brings in the crowds and spectacular sunsets still work their magic.

**Paradiso** (men/women from Rs 200/free; ☎ 10pm-4am Wed, Fri & Sat) The stunning sea views go unnoticed in this lurid temple to trance, which in season attracts all the top DJs, including old-timer Goa Gil.

## Getting There & Away

There are buses every half-hour or so from Mapusa to Anjuna (Rs 6). They park at the end of the road to the beach and continue on to Vagator and Chapora. Some go up to

Arambol. The two other bus stops inland from the beach are pick-up and drop-off points. Plenty of motorcycle taxis gather at the main crossroads and you can also hire scooters and motorcycles easily from here.

## VAGATOR & CHAPORA

A series of rusty cliffs and headlands bursting out of thickets of greenery help to give Vagator and charming Chapora one of the prettiest settings on the north Goan coast. It's this back drop, rather than the beaches (which are largely forgettable) that have made these two little villages the centre for the wild, outdoor parties that made Goa (in)famous. Large contingents of long-stay backpackers and party people religiously set up camp here for months on end every season.

## Information

There are PCO/STD/ISD places in the main street of Chapora. **Soniya Travels** (☎ 2273344; Chapora; ☎ 9am-11pm) is a good agency for transport bookings, foreign exchange and internet access (Rs 50 per hour).

In Vagator, the **Rainbow Bookshop** (☎ 9am-2am), opposite Primrose Café, stocks a good range of second-hand and new books and has internet access. Web access is available at several places; check out Jaws, Mira Cybercafé and Bethany Inn, all open from around 9am to midnight daily and charging Rs 50 per hour.

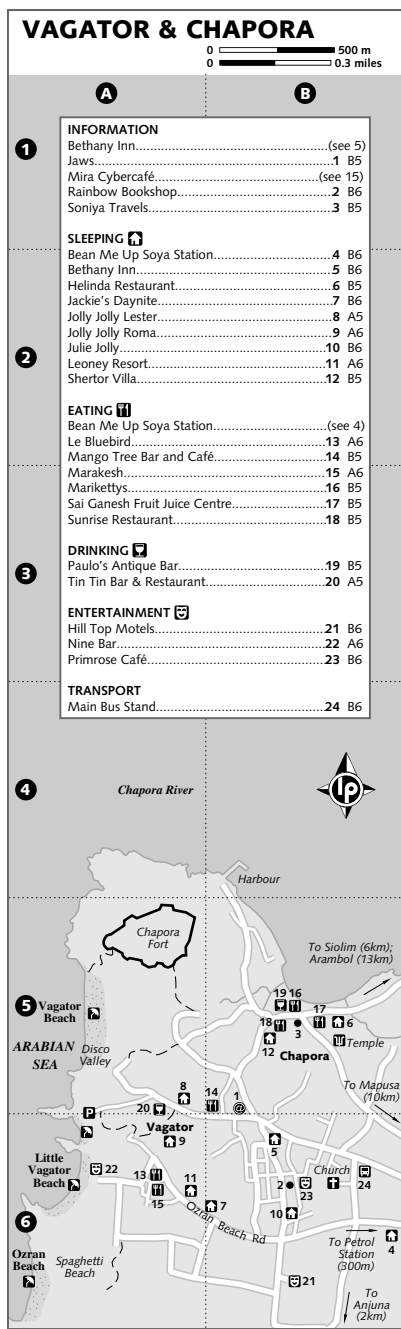
## Sights

On the rocky headland separating Vagator from Chapora sits a ruined Portuguese **fort** dating from 1617. Its worth climbing up here

### EL SHADDAI

Lounging around on Goa's beaches, it's easy to forget that the state shares most of India's social problems. The charitable trust **El Shaddai** (☎ 226650; www.elshaddaigoa.com; 2nd fl, St Anthony Apartments, Mapusa Clinic Rd, Mapusa) has established five homes – three in Assagao, between Vagator and Mapusa, and two in Saligao – where local children live and receive schooling. It also runs a night shelter in Panaji (Panjim).

You can visit the homes and the children daily between 4pm and 6pm. Donations of spare clothing or cash are welcome.



(access is easiest from the Vagator side) for the coastal views.

## Sleeping

If you're planning to stay long term it's possible to find a basic room (with shared bathroom) in a private house for around Rs 50 per night; ask around at the budget hotels for recommendations.

## VAGATOR

**Jolly Jolly Lester** (☎ 2273620; www.hoteljollygoa.com; s/d Rs 300/400, d with AC Rs 800; 🏠 📶) Jolly nice rooms are on offer at this tongue-twisting family-run backpacker hotel. The superclean rooms come in a weird array of shapes and sizes, but demand is always heavy. The same family run the equally good and similarly priced Jolly Jolly Roma (☎ 2273001), along the path leading to Little Vagator, and the Julie Jolly (☎ 2273386), near the Primrose Café.

**Jackie's Daynite** (☎ 2274320; melfordsouza@hotmail.com; Ozran Beach Rd; r Rs 350, cottages Rs 650) Day and night this backpackers hotel offers consistently tidy rooms set around a small garden, promising a quiet retreat from the chaos of the beach.

**Bean Me Up Soya Station** (☎ 2273479; d with shared/private bathroom Rs 450/650) Upmarket hippies will find the groovy rooms at this exceptionally well-run hotel perfectly blissful, man. It's certainly the best midrange hotel in Vagator and its acclaimed restaurant (opposite), won't disappoint either.

**Bethany Inn** (☎ 2273731; www.bethanyinn.com; d from Rs 600, ste with AC Rs 2000; 🏠 📶) The basic rooms aren't earth-shatteringly exciting but the swish AC rooms, in a separate daffodil-yellow building set back from the road, are pretty good. They'll happily negotiate the price on slow days. There's also a travel agency on site.

**Leoney Resort** (☎ 2273634; fax 2274914; Ozran Beach Rd; d/cottages Rs 1700/2500; 🏠 📶) This resort complex has less personality than a dead dab, but if dead dabs are your thing then the rooms here actually offer some of Vagator's best bang for your buck. The pool (Rs 200 nonresidents) is in tip-top shape. They don't accept charter groups or hippies – though god knows how they class who's a hippy and who isn't.

## CHAPORA

Lovely Chapora is generally more popular with long-staying hardcore hippies and tranceheads than Vagator and only has a



couple of official hotels, both of which are highly basic.

**Helinda Restaurant** (☎ 2274345; s/d from Rs 250/350) Clean and relaxed, Helinda has the best rooms in Chapora and is often full.

**Shertor Villa** (☎ 9822158154; d from Rs 350) Down a quiet side street, the 20 plain rooms here are presided over by a friendly guy who can normally be found over the road at the Noble Nest restaurant.

## Eating

### VAGATOR

The area's best eating places are situated in Vagator.

**Mango Tree Bar & Café** (mains Rs 70-120) The food at this flavour-of-the-month restaurant covers all corners of the culinary world and the breakfasts are quickly gaining legendary status. Has regular film screenings but be warned – some of these are near enough pornographic!

**Bean Me Up Soya Station** (☎ 2273479; main Rs 120-150) On the road towards the Anjuna petrol station, everyone's green and beautifully in touch with nature at this bizarrely named, but very good, vegetarian restaurant. Hosts frequent events that range from gigs to magic shows.

**Marrakesh** (mains Rs 120-160) Tajines, couscous and other Saharan splendours in Goa's only Moroccan restaurant.

**Le Bluebird** (☎ 2273695; mains Rs 150-300) Gallic culinary know-how under the palms of Goa make this one of Vagator's finest dining experiences. All the French favourites are here, even bottles of heart-warming Bordeaux.

### CHAPORA

There are several small restaurants along the main street of Chapora, including **Sunrise Restaurant** (mains Rs 40-80), which does a decent breakfast and lunch and **Marikettys** (Rs 100; ☎ 6pm-2am), where a Greek expat makes kebabs that you certainly don't need to be

stumbling drunk out of a club to enjoy. A local institution is the **Sai Ganesh Fruit Juice Centre** (Rs 15-30), which could well have Goa's best juices and lassis.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Vagator is the centre of Goa's dying party scene. If you're coming here expecting the massive full-moon pilgrimages that brought thousands of the faithful to Vagator's Disco Valley back in the '90s heyday then you're going to be disappointed. Since those times things have become increasingly staid, partially due to a general slump in the dance-music market but, more importantly, it's thanks to a government crackdown on the drugs scene and a ban on amplified music after 10pm. However, hardcore, mainly Israeli, fans are still partying here at more organised venues such as the legendary, open-air, Nine Bar, overlooking Little Vagator Beach, where trance and house music plays to a packed floor until 10pm. Depending on restrictions, the party then moves up to Primrose Café, towards the back of Vagator village, where music continues till 2am or 3am under a canopy of psychedelically painted trees.

Hill Top Motels is another venue with a huge garden of rainbow coloured palms that occasionally hosts outdoor parties past the 10pm music restrictions.

If incessant techno beats aren't your thing then you might get lucky at the **Tin Tin Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 9am-midnight) in Vagator, which has occasional live music and if not, then at least there's a pool table. **Paulo's Antique Bar** (☎ 8.30am-midnight) in Chapora is a tiny, brightly painted local bar with a cracking atmosphere and cold beers.

## Getting There & Away

Fairly frequent buses run to both Chapora and Vagator from Mapusa (Rs 12) throughout the

### INTERNATIONAL ANIMAL RESCUE

The **International Animal Rescue** (IAR; ☎ 2268328; iargoa@satyam.net.in; Madungo Vaddo, Assagoa), based near Vagator, does a sterling job tending to the army of stray cats, dogs, cows and other animals in Goa. They are involved in a state-wide sterilisation and rabies immunisation programme and also treat sick and injured animals of all descriptions. If you find a sick or injured animal or befriend a stray cat, dog or any other furry, feathered or scaly friend then take it to them so it can be properly cared for. They are in constant need of financial and physical assistance (dog walkers etc), but even just going on one of the guided tours (11am and 3.30pm) of their centre helps spread the message.



day. Many of these go via Anjuna. The bus stand is near the road junction in Chapora village. Most people hire a motorcycle to get around; inquire at hotels and restaurants.

## CHAPORA TO ARAMBOL

The Chapora River, spanned by the Siolim Bridge, is a magical ribbon dividing the mainly devastated beaches of charter and techno Goa from the gorgeous greens and tropical blues of a more undisturbed Goa of old to the north.

Public buses in this region of Goa are few and far between; to fully explore it you'd be advised to rent your own transport, preferably a scooter or motorbike.

### Morjim & Asvem

Crossing the bridge to Chopdem, you can head east to **Morjim Beach**, an exposed strip of empty sand with a handful of low-key beach shacks at the southern end and several places to stay at the northern end. Rare olive ridley turtles nest at the southern end of Morjim Beach from September to February, so this is a protected area, which, in theory at least, means no development and no rubbish. Morjim is one of the very few beaches where sitting on the sand doesn't attract hordes of hawkers, dogs and onlookers, but the water does suffer from a bit of river run-off pollution and cannot ever be described as crystal clear.

A short walk down the beach from Montego Bay (see below) is the **Goan Café** (☎ 2244394; anthonylobo2015@yahoo.co.uk; huts/tree houses Rs 600/1000). The three brothers who run this beachside property might well be the friendliest and most helpful hotel owners in Goa! The rooms are basic, but for sheer romance the tree houses are impossible to beat. There's also a great restaurant and they can sort out taxi and bike hire.

**Montego Bay** (☎ 2244222; www.montegobaygoa.com; tent/hut/cottage with AC Rs 1650/1650/3000; ♿) is for the camper who hates camping: the luxurious 'tents' found here come complete with bathrooms and are nothing like those you used at Scout camp. The huts and cottages are equally good. The restaurant, where you can relax in sunken lounge pits or a hammock, is overpriced.

For a change of scenery, the food at **Britto's** (☎ 2244245), also at the northern end of the beach, is worthy of praise.

**Ourpick Siolim House** (☎ 2272138; www.siolimhouse.com; standard/superior d incl breakfast, dinner & tax

Rs 6000/7000; ♿ ♿) is tucked away in the leafy lanes between Chapora and Morjim, and it's a truly special place to stay. Its seven large rooms are all individually designed to an exacting standard and contain more antiques than the British Museum. The service is of a calibre appropriate to such a grand old building and the pool and gardens perfectly maintained. Yes, it's expensive, but it sits near the top of the best hotels in Goa.

### Mandrem

The very fact that Mandrem has been ignored for so long is probably the reason why, the moment you step out onto its sands, a tingle will roll down your spine and you'll finally feel as if you've arrived in the Goa of tourist brochure clichés. For the moment there is little to mar the green backdrop and anyone brave enough to step out of the travellers circuit is going to be handsomely rewarded with the finest beach in Goa. Of the few groups of beach shacks, the **Riva Resorts** (☎ 2247088; www.rivaresorts.com; huts/cottages Rs 1000/1600), formerly known as Dunes, is the largest and most comfortable. It's popular with Indian tourists in the know.

On the bank of the Mandrem River, and with much more character, is the **River Cat Villa** (☎ 2247928; villarivercat@hotmail.com; d from Rs 2400), which is rammed full of sculptures and paintings and feels like an artists retreat. The rooms are beautifully maintained and many have large balconies overlooking the trees. It's one of the most interesting guesthouses north of Calangute and there's a good restaurant serving Continental dishes, too.

### ARAMBOL (HARMAL)

Shoved aside by the consumer age, the hippy '60s needed somewhere to hide; San Francisco wouldn't do, Carnaby Street couldn't cope and the Marrakesh Express was suddenly cancelled in a cost-saving exercise. Eventually reaching Arambol's sickle of sand and rash of beautiful, rocky bays the '60s knew it had finally found its never-never land. Ever since then travellers, attracted by the hippy atmosphere, have been drifting up to this blissed-out corner of Goa, setting up camp and, in some cases, never leaving again. In turn, a mushrooming (probably magic) industry of low-key accommodation and facilities has sprung up to cater to these visitors, and in the high season the beach and the road leading down to it gets pretty crowded. For the moment the flower-

power guys and girls hold the upper hand, but with all the beaches to the south full up, Arambol is starting to turn developers' hands sweaty with excitement and it can't be long until the sweet '60s are forced off in search of the next Kathmandu.

## Information

Arambol village has dozens of travel agencies (handling foreign exchange), including Divya Travels, Pedro Travels and Tara Travels. Internet access is available from several places, such as the reliable Cyberzone, and motorbike hire and other services are also widely available. Most of this is concentrated on the road leading to the northern end of the beach. A word of warning: theft is a big problem in the high season; most of the cheaper beach shacks have minimal security and leaving bags unguarded on the beach is just asking for trouble.

## Activities

From November to March it's possible to take **boat trips** to go fishing and dolphin spotting – operators will find you as you hang out on the beach. So-called extreme sports have taken

off in a big way in Arambol with plenty of people offering paragliding and kite-surfing lessons.

## Courses

About 2km south of Arambol is the **Himalayan Iyengar Yoga Centre** ([www.hiyogacentre.com](http://www.hiyogacentre.com); 5-day course Rs 1800), which runs hatha yoga courses on the beach between November and March. This is the winter centre of the Dharamsala school.

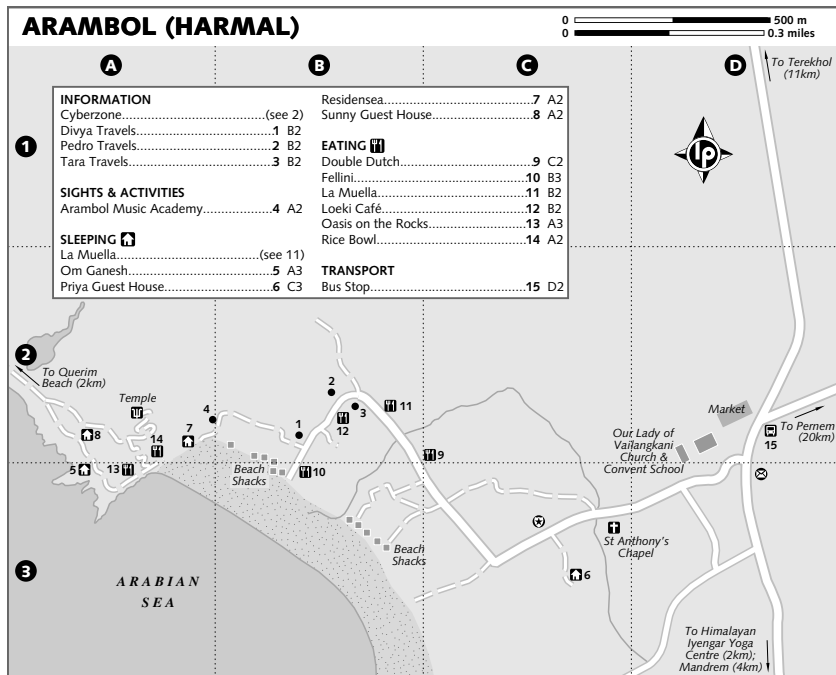
**Arambol Music Academy** (☎ 9326131795) offers lessons in classical Indian singing and tabla playing.

## Sleeping

**Priya Guest House** (☎ 2292661; d with shared/private bathroom Rs 200/250) Basic and a fair hike from the action, but it's gained a devoted fan club of repeat visitors. The attached restaurant is something of a social centre.

**Residensea** (☎ 2292413; pkresidensea\_37@hotmail.com; huts Rs 350) Large bamboo huts with shared bathrooms arranged around a simple restaurant with a perfect beachfront location.

**La Muella** (☎ 9822486314; d Rs 600) New Israeli-run hotel and restaurant venture with six



dingy rooms that are nevertheless the flavour of the month, no doubt thanks to the yoga classes held up on the roof. Rates are open to negotiation out of season.

The prime accommodation is the jumble of cliffside **huts** (d small/large Rs 450/600) on the next bay to the north of the main beach. Many remain very basic, but an increasing number now have private bathrooms and running water, and all have breathtaking sea views. Outside high season you can normally negotiate cheaper rates, especially for long stays. Two of the better places are the **Om Ganesh** (☎ 2297675) and **Sunny Guest House** (☎ 2297602) with the Sunny having the edge.

## Eating

There's a string of shacks lining the main beach, serving seafood and beer and offering similar menus and prices. Otherwise most places to eat (and drink) are on the busy lane leading down to the beach. All are open from breakfast until around 11pm.

**Rice Bowl** (mains Rs 30-100) It could equally be called Noodle Bowl or in fact any other kind of bowl, because anything they choose to put in their bowls turns out tasty. It has a prime location, legions of followers and a pool table.

**Loeki Café** (mains Rs 40-120) This very relaxed place is a big name on the town's hippy circuit and dishes up all the usual Goan favourites. Frequent jam nights.

**Fellini** (mains Rs 60-150) Fighting with the Rice Bowl for top-dog status, this Italian restaurant serves a memorable pizza and pastas that aren't lacking either.

**La Muella** (mains Rs 80-150) The new star of the Arambol restaurant scene, with healthy food cooked to delicious perfection. Vanilla and cinnamon shakes, homemade pastas, quiches and authentic hummus made by a real Middle Eastern.

**Double Dutch** (mains Rs 130) OK, so it doesn't have the sea views of some of the other places, but it does have mouth-watering steaks and apple pies that you simply won't be able to resist.

**Oasis on the Rocks** (mains Rs 60-250) A seafood specialist with wonderful views over your dinner's former watery home. It's a good one for couples looking for somewhere to get romantic.

## Getting There & Away

Buses from Mapusa stop on the main road at Arambol (Rs 12), where there's a church, a school and a few shops. From here, follow the

road about 1.5km through the village to get to the main road down to the beach.

## TEREKHOL (TIRACOL) FORT

How many times in your life have you woken up in a fairy-tale castle overlooking the Arabian Sea? Well at Terekhol, the northernmost outpost of Goa, you finally have that chance.

**ourpick Fort Tiracol Heritage Hotel** (☎ 02366-227631; nilaya@sancharnet.in; d/suite incl breakfast & dinner Rs 5500/7500) has seven stylish rooms that come with antique shields on the bedroom walls, studded doors to prevent elephant charges, a whitewashed chapel with a coat of colourful flowers and views that make you want to propose to whoever your with (so don't take your sister). Superb Goan dinners and Continental breakfasts are included in the price. Book ahead. Between 11am and 5pm nonguests can stop by for lunch or a drink.

A trip to the fort makes a good outing on a motorcycle. The winding 11.5km road from Arambol passes through villages and rice paddies and rises up to provide good views over the countryside and Terekhol River. You can also stop for a swim on near-deserted **Querim Beach**, though even this remote outpost suffers from the curse of uncaring visitors dropping rubbish, a little river-induced water pollution and a surfeit of drug dealers.

There are occasional buses from Mapusa to Querim (Rs 14, 1¼ hours), on the south bank of the river, opposite Terekhol, and also between Arambol and Querim (Rs 8, 30 minutes), but without your own transport you'll have to walk a couple of kilometres to reach the fort. The ferry between Querim and Terekhol runs every hour in each direction from 6.15am to 9.45pm, but the service is suspended for three hours at low tide. The trip takes five minutes, is free for pedestrians and Rs 4 for a car or motorbike.

## SOUTH GOA

### MARGAO (MADGAON)

pop 94,400

The capital of Salcete province, Margao (also known as Madgaon) is the main population centre of south Goa and is probably the busiest town in the state. If you've just arrived from the cities of 'real' India then the first thing that will strike you is how clean and tidy Margao is. Even though there is little to see or



do here it's worth stopping by to see how Goa lives beyond the beaches.

## Information

Visa or MasterCard cash advances are available at the Bank of Baroda. HDFC Bank has a 24-hour ATM accepting international cards on the ground floor of the Caro Centre; Cen-

## INFORMATION

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turion Bank has an ATM just off Luis Miranda Rd; and UTI Bank has an ATM near the roundabout just south of the main bus stand.

**Cyberlink** (Caro Centre, Abade Faria Rd; per hr Rs 25; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Internet access.

**GTDC tourist office** (☎ 2715204; Margao Residency; ☎ 9.30am-1.15pm & 2-5.45pm Mon-Fri) At the south end of the Municipal Gardens and not very helpful.

**Hindnet** (Valaulikar Rd; per hr Rs 20; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Internet access, just east of the municipal gardens.

**Main post office** (☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2-4pm) On the north side of the municipal gardens.

## Sights

Long-term visitors will want to visit Margao for its markets – the **covered market** in the town's centre is one of the largest and most raucous in Goa, and there's a fish and produce market in a vast complex near the Kadamba bus stand. The richly decorated **Church of the Holy Spirit** is worth a look and can be positively exciting when a big service is taking place.

## Sleeping

With the beaches of Colva and Benaulim less than 10km away there's no pressing reason to stay in Margao.

**Margao Residency** (☎ 2715528; Luis Miranda Rd; s/d Rs 550/650, d with AC Rs 780; ☎) This GTDC hotel is

centrally positioned and has large clean rooms with little balconies.

## Eating

**Tato** (Apna Bazaar Complex, Valualikar Rd; dosas from Rs 14, mains Rs 70; ☎ Mon-Sat) This is a favourite lunch spot with workers from the nearby businesses and it also attracts many passing backpackers.

**Banjara** (☎ 3222000; D'Souza Chambers, Valaulikar Rd; mains Rs 50-110) This dark and cool place with polar AC is Margao's best North Indian restaurant.

**Café Coffee Day** (Vasaith Arcade; Rs 50-150; ☎ 9am-midnight) This snack bar-coffee shop chain is ideal for homesick Westerners, with lots of healthy (and some decidedly less healthy) goodies that are a struggle to find out in the sticks. Popular with local students.

**Raissa's Herbs & Spices** (☎ 2731699; Priyadarshini Apartments, Rafael Pereira Rd; mains Rs 80-150) One of Margao's most highly regarded restaurants with an excellent selection of Chinese and Indian staples as well as some less common items such as delicious Afghani kebabs.

## Getting There & Around

### BUS

All local buses operate from the busy Kadamba bus stand 2km north of the town centre, but many also stop at the old bus stand opposite the municipal gardens. Catch buses to Colva, Benaulim and Palolem from Kadamba or from the bus stop on the east side of the municipal gardens.

There are hourly buses from both bus stops to Colva from around 7am to 7pm (Rs 7, 20 minutes). Some go via Benaulim. Buses to Panaji run from the Kadamba bus stand every 15 minutes (ordinary/express Rs 20/25, one hour). There are around eight buses a day direct to Palolem (Rs 30, one hour) and many others heading from either bus stand south to Karwar (Rs 65), stopping in nearby Chaudi. There are also local buses to Vasco de Gama (for the airport), Ponda, Chandor and Rachol.

Services to Mumbai (semideluxe/deluxe Rs 500/700, 14 hours), Bengaluru (Rs 450, 14 hours) and Pune (Rs 400, 10 hours) can be booked at the advance reservation office in the Secretariat Building. Long-distance government buses leave from the Kadamba bus stand. For most interstate trips it's best to use a long-distance private bus. There are private booking offices clustered near the Margao Residency on Luis Miranda Rd and costs are

the same or marginally higher than the more expensive government buses. To reach Hampi go first to Hubli (Rs 75), where you can find buses direct to Hampi.

### TAXI

Taxis (approximately Rs 100), autorickshaws (Rs 80) and motorcycle taxis (Rs 50, backpacks fine) to Colva or Benaulim gather around the municipal gardens and at the Kadamba bus stand.

### TRAIN

Margao's train station, Madgaon, is about 1.5km southeast of the town centre; vehicle access is via the road south of the train line but if you're walking there you can cross the tracks at the footbridge past the old station. There's a **reservation hall** (☎ 2721841) on the 2nd floor of the main building, a **tourist information counter** (☎ 2702298) and retiring rooms. See p841 for details of trains running from Margao to Mumbai.

Taxis between the train and bus stations cost Rs 70. There's a prepaid taxi booth out front (Rs 150 to Colva, Rs 500 to Panaji), as well as autorickshaws and motorcycle taxis.

## CHANDOR

The lush village of Chandor, 15km east of Margao, is one of the best respites from the beach in south Goa. Here, more than anywhere else in the state, the opulent lifestyle of Goa's former Portuguese overlords is visible in a couple of decaying colonial mansions.

**Braganza House** takes up one whole side of Chandor village square and dates back to the 17th century. It's now divided into east and west wings, which stretch outwards from a common front entrance. Ongoing restoration is slowly taking place but, wandering through the ballrooms with their Italian marble floors, Belgian glass chandeliers and carved rosewood furniture, it's hard not to feel a little sad for the lost world they represent.

The **east wing** (☎ 2784227; ☎ 10am-5pm) is owned by the Pereira-Braganza family, and includes a small family chapel containing a carefully hidden fingernail of St Francis Xavier. This side of the house shows its age much more than the other side and the old caretaker who shows you around seems almost on the point of tears when he passes through the ballroom with its sagging ceiling and damaged chandeliers. The old family

photos, cheap souvenirs from friends abroad and tacky knick-knacks all add to an overall sense of melancholy.

The **west wing** (☎ 2784201; 🕒 10am-5pm) belonging to the Menezes-Braganza family has clearly had more money invested in its restoration and is crammed with beautiful furniture and a whole museum's worth of Chinese porcelain. The two large rooms behind the entrance halls contain the largest private library in Goa. The elderly and formidable Mrs Menezes-Braganza lives here alone and, once she's waved her maids aside, will act as your guide. She doesn't take nonsense gladly, but is an entertaining host who represents the last of the old Goan-Portuguese families. In general there appears to be a lack of concern about these old houses and, without urgently needed funds for their restoration, you can only wonder what will become of them once the current custodians are gone.

Both homes are open daily, but you may want to call ahead to ensure the owners will be around. There is no official entry fee, but the owners rely on contributions for maintenance and restoration – Rs 100 to 200 per house is reasonable.

A kilometre east past the church is the **Fernandes House** (☎ 2784245; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat). It's smaller and less grand than the Braganza House, but older and with an interesting history. The original Indian house here dates back more than 500 years, while the Portuguese section was tacked on by the Fernandes family in 1821. The secret basement hideaway, full of gun holes and with an escape tunnel to the river, was used by the family to flee attackers.

South of Chandor, in the village of Quepem, the immaculately renovated **Palacio do Deao** (☎ 2664029; www.palaciodeadeao.com; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) has recently opened to visitors. The beautiful gardens are as much an attraction as the 200-year-old mansion. Evening meals are available with advance notice (mains Rs 250).

The best way to reach Chandor is by taxi from Margao (around Rs 150 round trip) or by motorcycle.

## LOUTOLIM

Further relics of a bygone age can be found in the unhurried village of Loutolim, 10km northeast of Margao. There are a number of impressive Portuguese mansions here but the only one officially open to the public is the

250-year-old **Casa Arajao Alvarez** (admission Rs 100; 🕒 9am-6.30pm), though it lacks much of the atmosphere of the houses of Chandor. It's also possible to visit the wonderful **Figueiredo House** (☎ 2777028) if you call ahead. This house, and its sister owners, were memorably featured in William Dalrymple's brilliant book, *The Age of Kali*, where, over tea and mango juice, Mrs Donna Georgina Figueiredo gets all uppity about the 'botheration' that was the Indian 'invasion' of Goa in 1961. It's fascinating reading and a visit to this house makes for an interesting hour or so. It's also possible to stay in one of the dark rooms (doubles from Rs 2500). Anywhere else such a room would be overpriced but here the experience is worth every rupee. Traditional Goan meals are also available if you book in advance.

Also in the village, and set up purely for tourists, **Ancestral Goa** (☎ 2777034; admission Rs 20; 🕒 9am-6.30pm) is a re-creation of Goan village life under the Portuguese a century ago.

Loutolim is best visited by motorcycle or taxi (around Rs 120 round trip) from Margao.

## BOGMALO & AROSSIM

Hidden between the airport and a sprawl of industry the forgotten village of Bogmalo, 4km from the airport, has a pleasant, sandy cove dominated by the ugly five-star Bogmalo Beach Resort. Aside from the beach, which is popular with Indian tourists looking for a quiet break, there isn't a great deal to do here. **Goa Diving** (☎ 2555117; www.goading.com) is a reputable dive school that offers PADI courses. Guided dives start at Rs 1430, courses at Rs 15,000.

Regular buses run between Bogmalo and Vasco da Gama (Rs 5), from where you can pick up buses to Margao and Panaji.

Accommodation in Bogmalo is more expensive than elsewhere in Goa.

Friendly, family-run **William's Inn** (☎ 2538004; d from Rs 900) has bright yellow rooms that are perfectly clean and represent great value for money. Auntie is certain to fuss over you.

**Saritas Guest House** (☎ 2538965; www.saritasguesthouse.com; Rs 900) has a great seaside location but it comes second best to Williams Inn.

**Coconut Creek** (☎ 2538090; joets@sancharnet.in; cottages incl breakfast from Rs 9500; 🍷 🍴 🚿) is a stylish resort set back from the beach in the coconut groves with modern, minimalist rooms and lots of bamboo furniture. The swimming pool is hard to resist and there's a good restaurant



serving Italian and Goan cuisine. Prices drop considerably out of season.

Around the headland, beyond the eyesore petrochemical plant, is Arossim village and beach. Here you'll find the stylish **Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa** (☎ 2721234; www.goa.park.hyatt.com; d from US\$200; ♿ ♿ ♿). The overriding feature of this sterile top-end resort is the maze of interconnecting pools. Prices vary by the day depending on availability but US\$200 should be seen as a ball-park high-season figure.

The best places to eat are John Seagull, where great views come with equally great seafood or, back in the village, Claudis Corner, which is recommended by all the locals.

## COLVA & BENAULIM

pop 10,200

It wasn't that long ago that Colva was nothing more than a peaceful little fishing village that attracted a handful of hippies bored of the sex, drugs and rock-and-roll lifestyle of Calangute. However, where hippies go, charter flights follow and in just the blinking of a stoned hippie's eye package tourism had changed paradise forever. Fortunately, the scale of development here is nowhere near that of Calangute – you can still see the fish being brought ashore in the morning.

Colva is popular with Indian families and a middle-aged European crowd, while Benaulim, 2km south, is still a very peaceful village with most of the accommodation in family guesthouses. It's a good place to rent long-term if you're after a relaxing Goan experience, but in both places the beaches are far from immaculate.

Bikes can be hired near the bus stand in Colva and on the beach in Benaulim. With fewer people than the northern beaches and quiet back lanes, occasional robberies do occur in Benaulim. Avoid walking from the beach alone at night.

### Information

There are branches of the Bank of Baroda both in Colva (next to the church, on Colva Beach Rd) and Benaulim, near the intersection of Colva and Vasvaddo Beach Rds. You'll find several travel agencies in both Colva and Benaulim that will change cash and travellers cheques and give cash advances on Visa and MasterCard. There's a Centurion Bank ATM accepting foreign cards on the main road in Colva, near Club Margarita.

**Amin Crystal Point** by the main junction in Benaulim rents out bikes and scooters.

**GK Tourist Centre** (☎ 2771221; per hr Rs 40; ♿ 9am-10pm) In Benaulim. Internet access and money exchange.

**Hello Mae Communication** (Colva Beach Rd; per hr Rs 40; ♿ 8am-10pm) Internet access.

**Ida Online** (Colva Beach Rd; ♿ 10am-1am) Internet access. Above Baskin Robbins.

**Meeting Point Travel** (☎ 2788626; Colva Beach Rd; ♿ 9am-10pm) Changes cash and travellers cheques.

### Activities

Water sports and dolphin tours have arrived at Colva, with **parasailing** and **jet-skiing** available in the high season for around Rs 500 per person and **dolphin tours** for around Rs 300. Just daring to pause on the beach for a second should guarantee touts approaching you with offers of tours. Be warned – we have received some serious complaints, involving intimidation, about some of the touts selling dolphin tours on the seafront.

### Sleeping

It's easy to rent houses long-term in Colva, particularly if you arrive early in the season (before December), and Benaulim is probably the best place in Goa for a long-term stay – just ask around in the restaurants and shops. Most houses are a 20-minute walk from the beach.

### COLVA

#### Budget

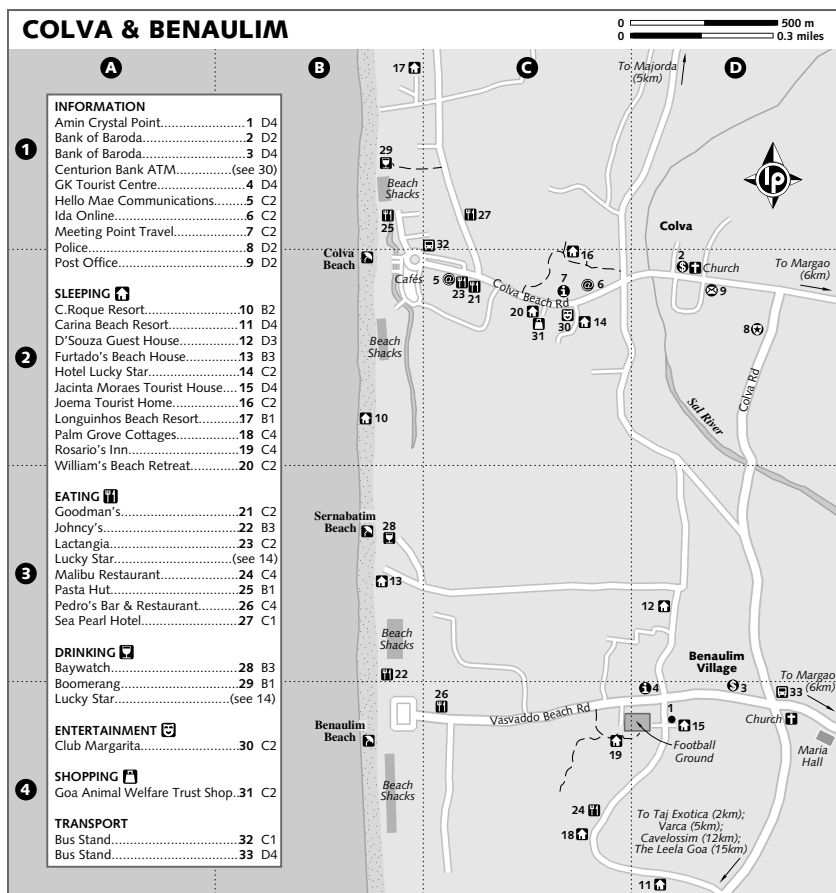
**Joema Tourist Home** (☎ 2888782; d Rs 350) One of the few guesthouses with any character, this quiet, flower-scented family home on a dusty side street has four clean, basic but superb-value rooms. The candle-lit garden café is very enjoyable. There are several similar places nearby.

**Hotel Lucky Star** (☎ 2788071; d Rs 400) A tightly run ship with brightly painted cottages and clean beachfront rooms make this an excellent choice. The attached restaurant (p874) is as good as the rooms.

### Midrange

**William's Beach Retreat** (☎ 2788153; www.goa.getaway.com; Colva Beach Rd; d without/with AC Rs from 1800/2500; ♿ ♿) The AC rooms look like something from a '70s porn film and, perhaps because of this, it's a popular hotel with charter groups. The pool, massage centre, restaurant and even the rooms aren't actually





bad but it might not be quite how your travel agent described it.

**Lounginhos Beach Resort** (☎ 2788068; www.lounginhos.net, s/d with AC Rs 2000/2400; 🍷 🚗) At the north end of the beach, this upmarket place has tidy rooms, spot-on service and a pool.

### BENAULIM

Less than 2km south of Colva, Benaulim is much more peaceful and rustic, with numerous guesthouses and small hotels spread over a wide area.

### Budget

**Jacinta Moraes Tourist House** (☎ 2770187; d Rs 150-250) With chickens squawking about the house and garden and a bubbly woman in charge

you're guaranteed a memorable stay. The clean rooms are a bargain at twice the price.

**Rosario's Inn** (☎ 2770636; d from Rs 250) Rosario's, next to the football ground, is a huge, good-value backpackers inn just a couple of minutes' stroll from the beach. It lacks the character of some of the Benaulim guesthouses.

**D'Souza Guest House** (☎ 2770583; d Rs 400) As you'd guess from the name this traditional blue house is run by a real Goan-Portuguese family and comes with bundles of homy atmosphere, a lovely garden and three spacious, clean rooms. Book ahead.

**Furtado's Beach House** (☎ 2770396; d without/with AC from Rs 1000/1500; 🍷 🚗) Prime beachfront location, spacious rooms set around a courtyard and not much idea about customer service.

## Midrange & Top End

**Palm Grove Cottages** (☎ 2770059; www.palmgrovegoa.com; d Rs 600-1200; ♿) From the hibiscus- and palm-lined driveway to the frog-filled ponds and old-fashioned rooms, the Palm Grove Cottages ooze class and character. It's a world away from the hubbub of the main strip and the beachfront.

**Carina Beach Resort** (☎ 2770413; bookings@carina-beachresort.com; d without/with AC Rs 950/1250; ♿) A large and somewhat run-down hotel set in peaceful gardens. The management are friendly, the pool is good and breakfast is included. It also has Ayurvedic massage during the high season.

**Taj Exotica** (☎ 2771234; www.tajhotels.com; d from US\$300; ♿) One of Goa's most stylish resorts, with an appealing contemporary design to the rooms (which include DVD players) and public areas. As with all resorts down the coast, Dabolim Airport transfers are included in the rates.

Also recommended by many readers is the **C Roque Resort** (☎ 738199; d Rs 350), which is a 15-minute walk up the beach towards Colva from Furtado's.

## Eating COLVA

The most popular places to eat in Colva are the open-sided wooden shacks lining the beach either side of where the road ends. These restaurants are a good place to watch the sunset with a cold beer, and they also serve breakfast. Among the beach shacks, Dominick's has been around a long time and is consistently good.

**Lactangia** (mains Rs 50-100) In case you've forgotten where you are this place has cheap and cheerful wholesome Indian food.

**Lucky Star** (mains Rs 50-200) An army of waiters tend to your every whim as you sedately flick through a menu of Goan specialities.

**Pasta Hut** (mains Rs 60-120) In front of the Hotel Colmar, and a good spot to sit with a happy-hour cocktail and watch the sun go down. The Italian dishes keep all the punters happy.

**Goodman's** (mains Rs 65-150) Fish and chips and north English accents are the order of the day at this home-away-from-home restaurant for the Brits. The big screen TV is the best place in town to catch up with the footy. It has a good atmosphere.

**Sea Pearl Hotel** (☎ 2780176; mains Rs 80-200) Sit among a jungle of potted plants in this

highly recommended seafood restaurant. The kitchen is spotlessly clean and the impressive menu includes lots of daily specials.

## BENAULIM

Most of the hotels and guesthouses have their own restaurants, which is lucky because Benaulim village has far fewer eating options than Colva. Johnny's, at the end of the main road from Benaulim village, is a perennial favourite and a popular meeting place.

**Pedro's Bar & Restaurant** (mains Rs 60-120) Beside the beach, this airy place doesn't believe in an imaginative menu, but even so the traditional Goan dishes and steak sizzlers are tasty.

**Malibu Restaurant** (mains Rs 90-150) With a pleasant alfresco setting, this place, a short walk back from the beach, is one of the more sophisticated dining experiences in Benaulim and has good Indian and Italian food. The breakfast is worthy of a mention, too.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Compared with the northern beaches, Colva and Benaulim are very quiet at night, with most people content to eat out and enjoy a few drinks near the beach.

**Club Margarita** (☎ 2789745; Colva Beach Rd; cover charge Rs 250; ♿) 7pm-3am The only nightclub in the area is on the main road into Colva. Formerly known as Gatsby's the name change has brought little real change to this small club playing a wide range of dance music.

**Baywatch** (☎ 2772795) Over on Sernabatim Beach, this is a little isolated but has a good bar and a disco with occasional party nights. In high season it also has accommodation.

Lucky Star and beachside **Boomerang** (♿) 24 hr) are among the more popular bars.

## Shopping

**Goa Animal Welfare Trust Shop** (☎ 2759849; www.gawt.org; ♿) 9.30am-12.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat) On the main junction in Benaulim village this shop, one of the only charity shops in Goa, is run by the deserving Goa Animal Welfare Trust, who does a sterling job dishing out some love to all the stray animals in south Goa.

## Getting There & Away

Buses run from Colva to Margao roughly every 15 minutes (Rs 10, 20 minutes) from 7.30am to about 7pm, departing from the parking area at the end of the beach road. Buses from Margao to Benaulim are also fre-

quent (Rs 6, 15 minutes); some continue south to Varca and Cavelossim. Buses stop at the crossroads known as Maria Hall.

## BENaulim TO PALOLEM

Immediately south of Benaulim are the up-market beach resorts of **Varca** and **Cavelossim**. Boasting an uninterrupted, 10km strip of pristine sand, this is where you'll find a cluster of five-star resorts, all luxurious, self-contained bubbles with pools, extensive private grounds and practically every whim catered for. One of the best is the **Leela Goa** (☎ 2871234; www.ghmho.tels.com; d from US\$200; 🚗 📺 📶) at Mobar, 3km south of Cavelossim. Some of the rooms go up to a not very cheap US\$3600 per night, but then again if it was good enough for Bill Clinton, it's good enough for you.

On the unlikely chance that you're not a former US President then don't fret – it's still possible to access the beaches, and the coastal road makes a more interesting and enjoyable route towards Palolem than the faster National Hwy. To cross the Sal River estuary, take the ferry from Cavelossim to Assolna – turn left at the sign saying 'Village Panchayat Cavelossim' before you get to Mobar, then continue on for 2km to the river. From there you can ride on to the fishing village of **Betul**.

The road from Betul to Agonda winds over hills and is a little rough in places. You can detour to the old Portuguese fort of **Cabo da Rama**, which has a small church within the fort walls, stupendous views and several old buildings rapidly becoming one with the trees.

Back on the main road there's a turn-off to **Agonda**, a small village with an empty beach that might well be the gem of south Goa. This clean and uncluttered beach actually lives up to expectations and is an idyllic retreat for travellers wanting to escape the tourist resorts. Heading south along the beach road you'll find **Dersy Beach Resort** (☎ 2647503; huts Rs 200, d Rs 300-800), which has spotless doubles, control-freak management and a highly popular restaurant.

**Dunhill Resort** (☎ 2647328; d Rs 400) has 12 tatty rooms with private bathrooms in which you almost have to stand in the toilet to use the shower. There's also a shady bar and restaurant.

**Sunset Bar** (☎ 2647381; r Rs 600), at the southern end of the beach, has a spectacular setting on a pile of granite boulders that would be the envy of any five-star resort. The rooms though

are far from five-star and the atmosphere is a little strange.

At the even quieter north end of the beach, **Forget Me Not** (☎ 2647611; cottages Rs 500, r with private bathroom Rs 1500) has a mixture of cheap bamboo huts and a whitewashed mud-brick house.

Another recommended spot is **Madhu Hotel** (☎ 9423813442; r Rs 800), close to the church. It has 10 seasonal huts with bathrooms.

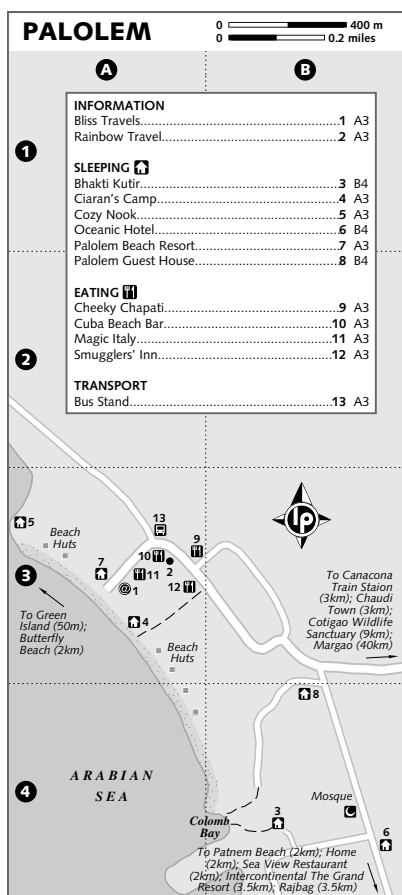
## PALOLEM & AROUND

Palolem is the most southerly of Goa's developed beaches and was once the state's most idyllic. Nowadays its beauty is very much dependent on your point of view. For those who believe a beach cannot be paradise without a decent selection of cheap restaurants and hotels, a dose of nightlife and plenty of like-minded people then Palolem is still top of the pops. For those who prefer their paradise to be a little less claustrophobic then Palolem will make you feel queasy. Whatever your opinion one indisputable fact is that Palolem is far from undiscovered – the sheer number of ramshackle camps protruding out of what was once almost pristine jungle has turned Palolem into a kind of tropical Glastonbury – with all the associated good and bad points. In September 2006 the government destroyed all unlicensed businesses and buildings and, for a short time afterwards, Palolem was very much down in the dumps. However it hasn't taken long for the village to get back on its feet and Palolem is once again back in the driving seat and sitting pretty at number one. The following listings feature hotels and restaurants that were fully licensed and unaffected by the bulldozers, but be warned that the situation may change and it is advisable to check ahead.

If Palolem is all too much for you then further north, and reachable by boat, is pretty **Butterfly Beach**, while around the southern headland is a small, rocky cove called **Colomb Bay**, with a couple of basic places to stay, and beyond that is another fine stretch of sand, **Patnem Beach**, with a handful of beach huts and something approaching surf.

## Information

Motorcycle hire and foreign exchange is available through several travel agencies, including **Rainbow Travel** (☎ 2643912; 🕒 9am-11pm). **Bliss Travels** (☎ 2643456; 🕒 9am-midnight), near the main entrance to the beach, is a good travel agent with internet access at Rs 40 per hour.



## Sights & Activities

About 9km southeast of Palolem, and a good day trip, is the rewarding **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary** (☎ 2229701; admission/camera/video camera Rs 5/25/100; 🕒 7am-5.30pm). If you go there expecting to see some of its larger inhabitants (including gaurs, sambars, leopards and spotted deer) then you're going to leave empty handed. Instead keep your eyes peeled for the smaller creatures – frogs, snakes, insects, and birds are all easy to see. Early morning is the best time to visit. **Cottages** (d Rs 250/500) are available at the park entrance.

**Boat tours** to see dolphins or to visit tiny Butterfly Beach are easy to arrange through most travel agents and hotels – a one-hour trip costs around Rs 150 per person. Three-

hour **mountain bike tours** (Rs 300) out to Patnem and Rajbag run on demand; ask at Ciaran's Camp (below).

## Sleeping

Prior to the bulldozing, the edge of the beach at Palolem was thick with palm-thatch or bamboo huts grouped together in about 30 little 'villages'. Prices for the most basic huts cost from Rs 100 a double (Rs 150 in peak season), rising to Rs 150 or even Rs 300 for the swankier ones. Whether all of these will return is anyone's guess – most likely they will but in reduced numbers and with higher prices. The following are all places that remain standing.

**Cozy Nook** (☎ 2643550; huts & tree houses Rs 500-1500) Superbly located blue-and-white huts at the northern end of the beach near the river mouth. Prices vary widely depending on room type, of which there are many kinds. We have received a few reports of indifferent service.

**Palolem Beach Resort** (☎ 2643054; yogishwer@sanchamet.com; tents Rs 350, d Rs 700) Just a little drunken stumble from the bars and restaurants, this complex is a good one if you want to be in the thick of it all. The large rooms are better than most and the pleasant gardens offer plenty of quiet, shady patches.

**Palolem Guest House** (☎ 2644880; palolemguesthouse@hotmail.com; d from Rs 600) If flimsy beach huts aren't for you then this place, five minutes' walk from the beach, offers tidy, tiled rooms with luxuries such as solid brick walls and glass windows! The owners are friendly and there's a good in-house restaurant.

**Home** (☎ 2643916; home.patnem@yahoo.com; d Rs 1000) This European-run hotel has sparkling white rooms with nice little terraces, and a perfect location on mellow Patnem beach. The atmosphere is very laid-back and friendly.

**our pick Bhakti Kutir** (☎ 2643472; www.bhaktikutir.com; huts Rs 2000, stone house Rs 2500; 🍷) Ensclosed in a coconut grove between Palolem and Patnem Beaches and surrounded by a thousand luminous birds, butterflies and flowers, the well-equipped jungle huts here offer something truly different. Refreshingly, almost all waste products are recycled and there are frequent dance, massage and yoga courses. The predominantly vegetarian restaurant is excellent.

**Ciaran's Camp** (☎ 2643477; johnciaran@hotmail.com; huts Rs 2500) By far the best of the beachside options, with a handful of luxurious, clean and airy huts set in nicely landscaped grounds.

**Oceanic Hotel** (☎ 2643059; www.hotel-oceanic.com; d standard/deluxe Rs 2000/3500; 🏠) On the road to Patnem Beach, this British-run hotel is in a class above most other places. The rooms, which are full of little luxurious extras, are so sparkling you'll need to put sunglasses on and the pool, oh boy, the pool...

**Intercontinental The Grand Resort** (☎ 2644777; goaresv@thegrandhotels.net; d incl breakfast from Rs 20,000; 🏠 📺 📺) A little further down the coast at Rajbag is Goa's largest resort. This highly desirable hotel is something of a Goan prince's palace – and it even comes with its very own golf course. Nonguests can use the pool for Rs 500 per day.

## Eating & Drinking

Apart from the shacks on its beach, Palolem has plenty to offer in the way of restaurants and bars.

**Cheeky Chapati** (mains Rs 100-200) Has good seafood and a few less-common species such as blue cheese and broccoli quiche. One of the towns better music collections.

**Seaview Restaurant** (mains Rs 100-200) Located on Patnam Beach, this Canadian-run place receives warm reports and its king prawns are considered worthy of royalty.

**Magical Italy** (mains Rs 120-160; 🕒 5pm-midnight) Run by an Italian couple, this is one of the best places for authentic wood-fired pizzas and pasta in Goa. There's free filtered water, wine by the glass and candle-lit tables.

**Smugglers' Inn** (mains Rs 120-200) With full English breakfasts, sausage and mash, and beef and ale pies that could be straight from Yorkshire, this is an unashamedly British place and after weeks of sloppy curries elsewhere in India, few people can resist. The bar area is comfy and there's a nook where you can watch all the latest DVDs and big football matches.

**Cuba Beach Bar** (mains Rs 100-300) It's not on the beach, nor is it in Cuba, but it's certainly the moment's drinking hole of choice. The food isn't bad either.

## Getting There & Away

There are hourly buses to Margao (Rs 25, one hour) from the bus stand on the main road down to the beach. There are also regular buses to Chaudi (Rs 5), the nearest town, from where you can get frequent buses to Margao or south to Karwar and Mangalore. The closest train station is Canacona.

# CENTRAL GOA

## PONDA & AROUND

The busy inland town of Ponda, 29km south-east of Panaji, is home to a number of unique Hindu temples and several spice plantations that make for an interesting day out.

The Hindu temples were rebuilt from originals destroyed by the Portuguese and their lamp towers are a distinctive Goan feature. The Shiva temple of **Shri Manguesh** at Priol-Ponda Taluka, 5km northwest of Ponda, is one of the best. This tiny 18th-century hill-top temple, with its white tower, is a local landmark. Close by is **Shri Mahalsa**, a Vishnu temple.

Among the other temples, the most architecturally interesting is the **Shri Shantadurga Temple**, 1km southwest of the town centre. Dedicated to Shantadurga, the goddess of peace, this temple sports an unusual, almost pagoda-like structure with a roof made from long slabs of stone.

One of the best spice plantations to visit is the **Tropical Spice Farm** (☎ 2340329; admission Rs 300; 🕒 9am-5pm) You'll be taken on an informative and entertaining 45-minute tour of the spice plantation, learning, among other things, how to pollinate vanilla and how to burn your taste buds out with the world's hottest chillies! An excellent buffet lunch is included in the price and elephant rides are available. The farm is about 6km northeast of Ponda and a taxi/rickshaw will cost Rs 250/170 with waiting time. The **Sahakari Spice Farm**, (☎ 2312394; www.sahakarifarms.com; 🕒 8am-6pm) is closer to Ponda and offers an almost identical tour.

There are regular buses to Ponda from Panaji (Rs 15, 45 minutes), but to visit the temples and a spice plantation you're better off with your own transport.

## BONDLA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

In the foothills of the Western Ghats, 52km from Panaji, lies **Bondla** (admission Rs 5, motorcycle/car Rs 10/50, camera/video Rs 25/100; 🕒 9am-5pm Fri-Wed), the smallest of the Goan wildlife sanctuaries (8 sq km) and the easiest to reach.

For the benefit of tourists expecting to see some animals, there's a botanical garden and a zoo. Large wild fauna includes gaurs and sambars, but you'll have more luck spotting the little, but no less impressive creatures.

## GREEN GOA

Increased tourism, overuse of water, and mining are all posing a threat to the environment in Goa – you can do your bit by conserving water when showering and frequenting the few restaurants that have installed water filters. Mining and water overuse aside, for many tourists the biggest and most obvious environmental problem concerns litter and the general lack of care that Goa's most prized possession – its beaches – receive. Come in the low season or even in the early and late high season and at a few beaches you will find an astonishing level of rubbish strewn across the sands. It seems very strange that a state so dependent on its beaches hasn't taken any real efforts to keep their most precious assets in tip-top condition. True, during the high season the major beaches are given a daily sweep, but this is only for a few weeks of the year. As a visitor, you can and should do your part to help keep the beaches clean (you might even help to change attitudes) by visibly picking up the rubbish (preferably in sight of the culprit) and taking it away with you to dispose of properly. It also doesn't hurt to complain to your hotel about the rubbish levels and suggest that if the local government won't do anything then the tourist industry itself needs to come together and take action to clean the beaches. After all, it would only need a tiny increase in accommodation and restaurant bills to generate enough money to pay for a small army of dedicated year-round beach cleaners.

The **Goa Foundation** (☎ 2263306; www.goacom.com/goafoundation) in Mapusa is the state's main environmental pressure group and has been responsible for a number of conservation projects since its inauguration in 1986. It also produces numerous conservation publications, such as the excellent *Fish Curry & Rice*, which is available from the Other India Bookstore (p852) in Mapusa, other Goan bookshops and on the website.

There's **chalet accommodation** (☎ 2229701; dm/ s/d Rs 75/250/350) at the park entrance.

Getting to Bondla is easiest if you have your own transport. By public transport there are buses from Ponda to Usgao village (Rs 5), from where you'll need to take a taxi (Rs 150) the remaining 5km to the park entrance.

## MOLEM & BHAGWAN MAHAVIR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The forlorn village of Molem is the gateway to the much more rewarding Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. The largest of Goa's protected wildlife areas covers 240 sq km, incorporating the 107-sq-km Molem National Park; there's an observation platform a few kilometres into the park from where you may catch a glimpse of animals such as jungle cats, deer and Malayan giant squirrels. Accommodation is available at Molem in the

GTDC **Dudhsagar Resort** (☎ 2612238; dm Rs 100, d without/with AC Rs 450/600; ♿).

The sanctuary is east of Panaji (54km from Margao), with its main entrance on NH4A. To reach it by public transport, take any bus to Ponda, then change to a bus to Belgaum or Londa, getting off in Molem.

## DUDHSAGAR FALLS

On the eastern border with Karnataka, Dudhsagar Falls (603m) are Goa's most impressive waterfalls – and the second highest in India. However, reaching them is expensive and time-consuming, and they are really only at their best during the monsoon – when they're inaccessible – and immediately after. To get here take an infrequent local train or taxi to Colem station, then a jeep for Rs 1800 (up to five people). The simpler option is to go on a full-day tour from Panaji (p843) or Calangute (p857).

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