

Destination Goa

Swaying palms, white sands and sparkling waters: the three essential elements that attract 2 million visitors annually to Goa's balmy shores are plentiful in this tiny, glorious slice of India hugging the country's western coastline and bounded by the Arabian Sea.

A solitary Portuguese outpost in India for almost 500 years, the influence of colonial rule can still be seen everywhere: in the exquisite, crumbling architecture; in the East-meets-West cuisine which combines coconut milk, palm vinegar and chillies with the refined flavours of Lisbon; in the melancholy strains of *fado* that still waft occasionally on the bougainvillea-scented breeze; and in the siesta-saturated *joie de vivre* that Goans themselves call *susegad*.

Nowhere else in India will you find the laid-back languidness of a Goan lunchtime, the easy charms of its people or the soothing serenity of a day on its beaches. Here in Goa, a herd of water buffalo will greet you at breakfast; a lily-covered lake might provide the scenery for your morning walk; a sea eagle will be your afternoon companion along a deserted stretch of pristine beach; a gorgeously spice-laden *vindalho* (vindaloo) might make your evening repast and a fiery glass of cashew-palm *feni* liquor your bedtime tonic.

No wonder that just about everybody wants – or wanted at some point in history – to come here. The pretty state has had her fair share of would-be conquerors, from the Mauryans to the Marathas, to the British, Dutch and Portuguese, some friendly, some bothersome and some more persistent than others. Meanwhile today, slowly spit-roasting pinkish package tourists throng the northern beaches; upwardly mobile internationals sun themselves beside carefully landscaped pools; well-heeled Delhiites live it up in nightclubs; Japanese backpackers shake off the orderliness of back home; and young Israelis forget the stresses of recent military service.

But international travellers aren't the only non-Goans who arrive in the sunny state in search of the good life. Goa enjoys one of India's highest per-capita incomes and comparatively high health and literacy rates, factors which attract a good scattering of folks from other parts of India who arrive either in search of work, or seeking that magical *susegad* they've heard so much about. Some are refugees of the Mumbai (Bombay) rat race who've given up respectable jobs in law, high-tech or the business world to pursue their dream of a little restaurant by the sea or a colonial mansion in the hinterland. Others are Kashmiris, Tibetans, Nepalis, Lamanis from Karnataka, and migrant workers from Gujarat and Orissa, who come here seeking work in the tourist trade, or harder labour as fisherfolk and seasonal farm workers in Goa's verdant paddy fields. Sadly, Goa's large population of homeless, begging and hungry are also migrants, driven from their homes often due to water shortages, and hoping life here will treat them more kindly. Almost inevitably, it doesn't.

What exactly entices this heady human mix to Goa, of all possible tropical paradises? First and foremost, there's the beach: long and lovely, peppered with wooden outriggers, coconut vendors and laid-back shacks, Goa's palm-backed beaches are, at their best, simply divine. Next, and a close contender, comes the cuisine: seafood, spices, dishes unique to the state and high-level international cuisine are all represented statewide, and will leave your mouth watering at the memory long after you've headed home. Then there's the art and architecture, a glorious commingling of European opulence, Hindu technicolour and local materials, sure to excite buffs of all things cultural. Increasingly, droves also arrive in Goa

FAST FACTS

Population: 1.34 million

Average annual income per capita: Rs34,000 (US\$683)

State capital: Panaji (Panjim)

Religion: Hindu 65%, Roman Catholic 30%, Muslim 5%

Size: length 105km, width 65km

Literacy rate: 82% (national average: 65%)

Number of tourists annually: 2 million (12% of tourists to India)

Staple lunch dish: fish-curry-rice

Strangest historical relic: St Francis Xavier's fingernail, Chandor

Best hidden sight: Netravali Bubble Lake

specifically for the spiritual: yoga, ayurveda and reiki, along with shiatsu, t'ai chi and every other imaginable alternative therapy, are on offer here in constantly changing permutations.

And still, this isn't all. Travellers, both luxury or shoestring, are drawn to Goa's beach huts or boutique hotels, depending on their state of mind and bank balance, while wildlife-lovers flock here in search of creatures of the marine, mountainous, furry, flying and feathered kind. Those more interested in the anthropological than the ornithological are intrigued by Goa's riot of religions (luckily, rarely literally) and their attendant festivals that often cross religious boundaries to be celebrated with aplomb by all.

But that's not to say that, despite its myriad charms, Goa's a perfect paradise. A sorely stressed environment is one of its major troubles, along with poverty, prostitution, a shady drugs trade, violent crime and police corruption. Goa's environment has been heavily burdened by an onslaught of tourism over the last 40 years, but equally by the effects of industry, logging, iron-ore mining, uncontrolled industrial growth and some destructive local customs. Rare turtle eggs have traditionally been considered a delicacy; plastic bottles lie in vast glaciers as unreceding as the real kind are the reverse; and vagrant cows feast on refuse from unfragrant rubbish bins. Meanwhile, animal shelters overflow with unwanted domestic creatures and children's homes struggle to provide shelter, safety and education for the state's shockingly large population of at-risk and orphaned children. A number of charities – both locally run and foreigner-helmed – address some of these issues, though, as they'll attest, their level best is seldom enough.

Despite its manifold problems, whether you choose to ply the state squeezed sardine-like into a faithful chugging bus or opt to buzz its byways by scooter or on a roaring Royal Enfield motorbike, the more you explore, the more you'll love this little haven amid the maelstrom that is India. Wander its riotous markets, experience a blazingly colourful Muslim, Hindu or Catholic festival, then lie back and relax with a sunset cocktail or an ayurvedic massage on its glorious beaches, where coconut palms murmur gently overhead and crabs scuttle silently in the shallows. However you choose to travel – and whether you're here to find yourself, find a quiet stretch of sand, or find an arboreal puff-throated babbler – Goa will likely leave you as hooked as one of the evening's sumptuous seafood specials.

Getting Started

The breadth of foreign visitors to Goa, from two-week package tourists to long-term travellers and young families with toddlers in tow, is a testament to its many and varied charms, and to the sheer ease of travelling here compared to some other Indian states. The state's diminutive size makes it easy to navigate, either by bus, taxi, motorbike or hire car, allowing you to hop easily from place to place, or pick your perfect base and head out on day trips to explore the rest.

Travel in Goa is generally more expensive than the rest of the country, but its vast range of facilities – from the most basic of beach shacks to five-stars exuding opulence – means that you can travel hassle-free here on any budget, although over Christmas and New Year the crowds descend and prices tend to skyrocket accordingly.

As with any holiday destination, there are health and safety elements to be considered and the sea should be treated with particular respect (drownings are sorrowfully commonplace each season), but the laid-back attitude of locals, along with the sunny charms of the state itself, mean that Goa couldn't be an easier place to visit.

WHEN TO GO

The best, and most popular, time to visit Goa is during the cooler months of November to March, when the weather is wonderful, rain is a distant memory, and the seas are calm and clear. Arriving in October, at the very start of the tourist season, you'll find beaches luxuriously empty, but many facilities, such as shops, restaurants, beach shacks and beach-hut operations, aren't yet up and running. As March stretches into April and May, the weather grows hot and humid, and swimming becomes trickier due to rougher seas. Beaches slowly empty of tourists but, much like October, this means that facilities aren't as extensive, businesses slowly shutting up shop to await the return of tourists the following November.

Many Goans, however, feel that the monsoon, which douses Goa between June and the end of September, is when the state is at its very best. Parties and celebrations are held to welcome the rains, and the countryside turns lush and green almost overnight. Swimming in the sea generally is off-limits during monsoon, since tides are strong, and most tourist facilities are closed, meaning that if you visit at this time you'll have the place to yourself for bargain-basement prices.

Without doubt the peak season for visitors to Goa is over the short Christmas and New Year period, when prices are hiked phenomenally and many places are booked solid a year in advance. Yet this is a great time to be

See Climate Charts (p226) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- A few extra luggage items for a local charity
- A reliable padlock, for securing belongings while staying in palm-thatched beach huts
- A torch to navigate poorly lit streets and negotiate frequent power cuts
- Your driving licence (and copies) for hiring a scooter, motorbike or car
- Your bank card for withdrawing cash: Goa's now well equipped with ATMs statewide
- Something long-sleeved to throw on when visiting churches, temples and mosques

in Goa: the weather is glorious, the atmosphere is suitably festive, the tinsel is liberally festooned, and fireworks grace the evening sky. Though Goa's frenetic party scene of years gone by has now slowed to a trickle, this is when all the best parties are held, and music festivals grace the northern coast's clubs and beaches. Don't expect peace and quiet, but for gleeful Christmas spirit under the tropical sun it surely can't be beaten.

COSTS & MONEY

Something likely to strike you repeatedly as strange while you're in Goa is the wildly varying differences in prices. A fill-you-up thali meal at a local lunch joint, for example, might cost Rs50, while dinner at a cool Calangute restaurant can easily set you back Rs5000. A night's stay in a simple Arambol beach hut might go for Rs150, while a five-star suite further down the coast will cost Rs150,000. The price of a coffee at a frothy countrywide chain will be more than many Goans make in a whole working week.

If you're travelling on a budget it's possible to survive on Rs400 (US\$10) per day, getting about by local bus, staying in rock-bottom beach huts and eating exclusively in local-orientated restaurants. Outside the November to March high season, accommodation costs are substantially reduced but, on the other hand, many of the budget beach huts have been carefully packed away for the monsoon. At the other end of the scale, staying at boutique hotels or five-star resorts, eating at top-end options, buying cool local handicrafts, enjoying a few daily sunset cocktails and day-tripping by taxi can easily see you spending US\$250 a day or more.

It's equally easy to steer a comfortable middle course. Opting for simple yet atmospheric accommodation, dining at a combination of beach shacks and local lunch joints, hiring a scooter to get about and allowing for a bit of nightlife, you should be able to get by on around US\$25 per day. Top that up with an occasional bit of fine dining, a yoga class several times per week, a massage now and then and a night or two of luxury in a cool Goan getaway, and US\$50 per day will do the trick nicely.

TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Responsible travel in Goa takes into account two key factors: first, the state's sorely taxed environment, and second, cultural sensitivity toward the local population. Consideration of both can help to minimise your impact while holidaying here, and help make a positive difference to some of Goa's biggest problems.

In the last two decades, tourism has overtaken mining as Goa's most significant industry, and the annual influx of holidaymakers now outnumber the state's entire permanent population. Strains on the environment seem inevitable with so many people passing through a small and delicate area, a problem compounded by a local government keen to encourage midrange and top-end travel, rather than the more ecoconscious hippies of yesteryear.

Five-star hotels, with lush, landscaped grounds, put increasing pressure on the water resources available for locals, and at some times of the year villagers survive with just a trickle of water while tourists frolic nearby in the pool. Massive amounts of refuse are generated by tourists (think how many mineral-water bottles a single visitor gets through in a fortnight), and there are few facilities for recycling or responsible disposal of waste. Moreover, irresponsible hotel construction has blighted once beautiful beaches – head to Bogmalo (p191) if you need proof – and high-paying hotel kitchens push the price of simple market ingredients such as rice, eggs and vegetables to ever-increasing heights. Thus, while budget travellers have traditionally posed

HOW MUCH?

Bhaji-pau breakfast Rs8

Lunchtime thali Rs50

One-hour bus ride Rs8

Professional shave Rs50

Happy hour cocktail
Rs100

See also Lonely Planet

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TOP TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

- Support those who support the environment – choose accommodation that implements an ecofriendly approach to waste management.
- Spread the wealth: eat at local restaurants as well as tourist-orientated get ups, and don't stick solely to this guidebook's recommendations.
- Consider buying souvenirs from cooperatives or charity concerns.
- Read up on local charities (p73) and try to help out in any way you can, however small – even if only by saving your old holiday newspapers for the cages of the local dog shelter.
- Refill water bottles with filtered water (some restaurants and hotels offer this for free) or buy the larger-sized 5L and 20L Bisleri bottles, which come with a refundable deposit.
- Use bath and shower water sparingly – water shortages for local villagers usually occur at the end of the tourist season.
- If you're travelling with tinies, opt for reusable nappies over disposable ones – local laundry costs are negligible and will return your terry-towels fresh and fragrant.
- Be culturally sensitive away from the beaches: cover the bikini and hide the Speedos while shopping in the centre of town.
- Think carefully about your attitude to beggars and beach hawkers, and remember that, even if they're annoying, there's a reason they're plying the beaches for very little cash.

social challenges to local Goans through nudity, partying and drug use, it's undeniable that bamboo and palm-thatch beach huts can be dismantled at the end of a season, and that local restaurants have frequently benefited from shoe-stringing travellers' custom.

Culturally, too, Goa faces challenges as a result of tourism. Many impoverished Indians arrive in the state hoping to make money from tourists by begging, which in turn begs the crucial question: 'to give or not to give?' The hardline school says 'don't', arguing that it's impossible to know whether the money you give will be used in a positive way, and that begging often supports an evil, pimp-controlled industry whose victims are the beggars themselves. More moderate members of this camp argue that money is better given to charitable organisations; cynics might counter that this proclamation is all very well, but question how many people actually end up doing so. In contrast are those who simply take each individual situation at face value, and acknowledge that sometimes a beggar is simply a person in genuine need of help. Local Indians (even those who are obviously not wealthy) also often give something, and there's always the option of offering food if you're uncomfortable giving money. Ultimately the choice is a personal one, but either way it's not a decision to be taken lightly.

Finally, in terms of responsible cultural travel, comes the question of dress. Though Goans are used to seeing tourists in skimpy swimwear along the beach, it's still considered highly culturally insensitive for women to swim or sunbathe topless, or for anyone to sunbathe nude. Away from the beach, it's good manners to cover the shoulders and upper legs; refraining from heading into town in your bikini top and shorts is simply a polite way of respecting locals' own propensity for modesty, and will be quietly appreciated.

On visits to churches, shrines, temples and mosques, it's likewise appropriate to cover up, and it is customary to take off your shoes before entering a Hindu temple or a local home. Don't shout or smoke at

Mapusa's Other India Bookstore (p162) is a great place to look for books on all things green and responsible in Goa. Titles are also available online at www.otherindiabookstore.com.

religious sites; never touch a carving or statue of a temple deity, and Hindu etiquette advises against touching anyone on the head, or directing the soles of your feet at a person or religious image.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

There's surprisingly little travel literature available about Goa, considering its perennial popularity as a destination. Titles that are widely available are truly tried and tested traveller favourites, though no less worth picking up for that.

TOP PICKS



BEST HIDDEN BEACHES

Believe it or not, you can still fulfil those castaway longings on Goa's golden sands, though with the advantage that you'll never be *too* far from a nice, icy drink.

- **Agonda** (p202) Brisk surf, nesting turtles, broad sands and serenity: a nature-lover's dream.
- **Mandrem** (p174) Salute to the sun on a picture-perfect, spiritually slanted beach.
- **Polem** (p211) Ignore the tales of unfriendly smugglers, and head off to explore Goa's southernmost sands.
- **Butterfly Beach** (p206) Pay the ferryman in Palolem to take you north to this tiny lepidopterous cove.
- **Querim** (p178) Scoot up from Arambol to find more elbow-room along the northern sands.

BEST ECOCONSCIOUS STAYS

If you're up for luxury without paying the environmental price, these cool concerns are attempting to minimise their environmental impact.

- **Yoga Magic, Anjuna** (p167)
- **Elsewhere, Mandrem** (p175)
- **Casa Susegad, Loutolim** (p186)
- **Backwoods Camp, Matkan** (p140)
- **Bhakti Kutir, Palolem** (p207)

BEST WILDLIFE WATCHING

Go wild for all things furry and feathered, with a trip to one of the following clean, green escapes.

- **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary** (p210) Position yourself all along the watchtower and wait for the creatures to emerge.
- **Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary** (p122) Goa's glorious birdlife is resplendent on this riverine island sanctuary, easily explored by dugout canoe.
- **Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary** (p137) Remote and wildlife-filled; you'll find few hikers to share your forest trails here.
- **Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary** (p138) Sleep over in tented luxury then venture into this vast park, to spy India's second-highest waterfalls.
- **Netravali Protected Area** (p210) Drive up into the heart of the Western Ghats, and wander unmarked forest paths to spot the shy and retiring species who make their homes here.

The indisputable classic is Richard Burton's *Goa and the Blue Mountains or Six Months of Sick Leave*, originally published in 1851. This irreverent account of his journey through Goa southwards to Ootacamund makes grand Victorian reading, despite all its characteristic condescension, and can be picked up in paperback at bookshops statewide.

A perfect partner to Burton, and a wildly contrasting historic account of Goa, can be found in Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola*, set this time in the state's infamous 1970s 'freak scene', with searing, enduring insights into the excesses that accompany some travellers' quests for spiritual enlightenment in India.

For something a little more varied, worth dipping into is *Reflected in Water: Writings on Goa*, edited by Jerry Pinto. Here literary luminaries like Graham Greene and William Dalrymple offer their impressions of the sunny state, along with writings from prominent Goans and fascinating historical titbits.

Delving back still further into history, and perfect for those keen on Goa's opulent heritage, seek out the vivid *Voyage to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, by 17th-century traveller François Pyrard, who journeyed through the state in its glory days, after being shipwrecked nearby in 1608.

More contemporary is Alexander Frater's *Chasing the Monsoon* (1991), which chronicles the writer's journey following the onset of the monsoon as it moves north through India. Frater passes through a grey and rainy Goa, painting a vivid puddled portrait of a season that few travellers ever see in person.

A growing number of elderly Goans are these days publishing memoirs and biographies with small local publishing houses. These can prove unpolished gems for really getting beneath the state's skin, but print runs can be short and titles difficult to obtain once the first batch sells out. Head to the Golden Heart Emporium in Margao (p182), and browse its excellent selection of local writings on Goa, to find the latest available titles.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Goa Tourism (www.goa-tourism.com) The state tourism body, the Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC), offers online information on its hotels, range of day trips and multiday tours, and tourism-related news. Also see p235.

Goa World (www.goa-world.com) This site offers lots of general information on Goa, and a link to a Konkani music radio station, to get you into the heady Goan mood before you arrive.

Goacom (www.goacom.com) A good all-rounder with news clips, up to date 'What's On' listings, and dozens of 'how to' video recipes for creating Goan and Indian classics.

Herald (www.oherald.com) Check out the online edition of Goa's *Herald* newspaper to keep up-to-date on local news.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Start your internet explorations here with succinct travel summaries, hotel reviews and Thorn Tree traveller forum.

Navhind Times (www.navhindtimes.com) Competing with the *Herald* for the top news spot, the *Navhind Times* offers daily Goan news and features.

Pick up the Goa Foundation's sourcebook *Fish, Curry and Rice* (Rs400), available statewide, to get to grips with Goa's tourism, environmental and social issues.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

NORTHERN NAMES

Two Weeks / Terekhol Fort to Fort Aguada

Start your northern odyssey with a stay at fascinating **Terekhol Fort** (p178), the perfect antidote to the task of getting to Goa. From here, hop on a ferry south for a solitary sunbathe in **Querim** (p178), then head to **Arambol** (p175) for some beach-hut living and a firmly festival vibe. Continue south to mellow **Mandrem** (p174) for some serious serenity and a yoga lesson or two, then move on to **Aswem** (p174), perhaps for lunch in its renowned French-inspired beach shack, and to **Morjim** (p174) for a walk along the pretty estuary banks.

Next, head inland via Siolim to get to **Chapora** (p168) and **Vagator** (p168) to experience the final dregs of the Goa Trance scene, and watch the hippies brandishing their *charas* and chillums. Then set off to spend time in **Anjuna** (p164), coinciding with its legendary Wednesday flea market to sniff out a bargain, then continue your shopping spree at workaday **Mapusa** (p161), its own, locally flavoured market, best experienced on a Friday morning.

Backtrack to **Baga** (p154) and **Calangute** (p154) to pick up the pace, hit the clubs and dine on fine foodstuffs, then head south to **Candolim** (p147) for a jaunt up the hill to impressive **Fort Aguada** (p148), ending your journey, as it began, in the shadow of Portugal's once-mighty colonial conquests.



From Portuguese forts to hippie hang-outs made infamous in the 1960s when the first beach bums blazed their heady trail, this 50km journey – possible by bus, taxi or under your own steam – takes you through the dizzyingly diverse worlds of North Goa's beaches.

SOUTHERN SUN

Two Weeks / Margao to Polem

Stock up on supplies for your journey in relaxed, workaday **Margao** (p181), then head briefly northwest, to begin your sandy sojourn on the sands of **Velsao** (p192). From Velsao, head slowly down the coast, stopping off at the beaches of **Arossim** (p192), **Utorda** (p192), **Majorda** (p193) and **Betalbatim** (p194) along the way, perhaps with a swanky night or delicious dinner at one of this stretch's five-stars thrown in.

Stop in at **Colva** (p194) or **Benaulim** (p197) to replenish your supply of essentials or spend the night, then continue on down along the lazy sands of **Varca** (p198) and on to **Cavelossim** (p199) for an evening of live music at its cool jazz club. From here, detour to **Mobor** (p201) to get a feel for pristine estuarine life, then double back to Cavelossim to jump on a ferry to **Assolna** (p201), and begin your exploration of Goa's southernmost stretch.

Follow the coastal road through bucolic **Betul** (p202) all the way to **Agonda** (p202) where you can relax in barefoot splendour, and get stuck into those books you've brought along for the ride. Next, head down to **Palolem** (p204) where the pace is a little less lazy, and try to track down one of its locally famous 'Silent Parties'. Base yourself in Palolem, or in nearby **Patnem** (p208), to explore the south's **hidden coves** (p206), or to take a day trip down to **Galgibag** (p210) or **Polem** (p211), two of the state's quietest beaches, gracing the coast along the slow road down to Karnataka.

Become a beach baby in the extreme, with this 50km route along the south coast's stunning stretches of sand and quiet coastal villages. Hire a motorbike or scooter for the best beachside idling, allowing you to hop off, and dip in, as often as your heart desires.



ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

AN INLAND ADVENTURE

Two Weeks / Panaji to Palolem

Begin in **Panaji** (p109), the languid state capital, perfect for shopping, eating, drinking and roaming around its lazy Latin-flavoured streets. Next, head east along the Ribandar Causeway to World Heritage-listed **Old Goa** (p122), where the ghosts of Goan history await. Backtrack to **Ribandar** (p122) to catch a ferry to **Chorao Island** (p122), home of the **Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary** (p122), then ferry-hop to **Divar Island** (p130) for its sleepy island life, and take a third ferry to **Narao** (p143), to the tiny, ancient **Shri Saptakoteshwara Temple** (p143) and quiet **Mayem Lake** (p144).

Head west across to **Corjuem Island** (p144), stopping in at **Aldona** (p144), **Pomburpa** (p145), and sleepy **Britona** (p145) on the banks of the Mandovi River. Turn south, skirting Panaji, via **Goa Velha** (p131) and **Agassim** (p132), on the road to sleepy, ancestral **Loutolim** (p185). Rest up here, before pressing east to the temples and spice farms of **Ponda** (p133). Head further east to explore one of Goa's two wildlife sanctuaries: bird-filled **Bondla** (p137) or **Bhagwan Mahavir** (p138), with its giddy waterfall. Detour to the ancient **Tambdi Surla Mahadeva temple** (p139), then head south to **Chandor** (p187). Here, explore Goa's grandest mansions, or root out the traces of its long-gone empires, then head through small, busy **Quepem** (p188) to the **Rivona Buddhist caves** (p188) and **Usgalimal rock carvings** (p189), continuing on to the mysterious **Netravali Bubble Lake** (p210). Then make one final inland excursion to beautiful **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary** (p210) to top it all off, then head to picture-perfect **Palolem** (p204) to rest up.



Remind yourself that there's far more to Goa than beaches with a stunningly diverse 200km adventure exploring historic forts, temples, mansions and churches. Trek into wildlife-rich national parks and explore far-flung tracts of countryside, with the occasional dose of luxury thrown in for good measure.

TAILORED TRIPS

GOA WITH CHILDREN

Strolling Goa's sands today, you'll see more visiting children cavorting here than ever before. Goans love children, and your little ones will be greeted with smiles, sweets and treats in abundance.

First and foremost, hit the beach, with paddling opportunities and rock pools galore (though it's important to heed advice on swimming safety). For a traveller-type vibe, try southern **Palolem** (p204) or northern **Arambol** (p175) – both increasingly popular with families – while the coastal strip between **Velsao** (p192) and **Mobor** (p201) has lots of five-star resorts catering to small travellers, with kids' clubs on-site and shallow swimming pools.

Even fussy eaters in Goa will have no trouble satisfying small appetites, but head to **Panaji** (p117), **Calangute** (p159) or **Baga** (p159) for the widest choice of dining; even the fanciest places are decidedly child-friendly. In

Panaji and **Margao** (p181) you'll also find lots of toy shops and bookshops catering to smaller travellers, while Panaji offers sunset **river trips** (p115) and a comfortable multiplex **INOX cinema** (p119) for when the heat gets too much. Small astronomers might also be keen to head up to its night-time **public observatory** (p115).

Kids will delight in a visit inland to a **spice plantation** (p134) with an opportunity to ride an elephant, and older children will love the trek to **Dudhsagar Falls** (p139). Weary parents might also be pleased to know that **Arambol** (p175), **Anjuna** (p164) and **Palolem** (p204) all have kindergartens that run seasonally: seek out in-the-know parents when you arrive.



TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Leave room in your luggage and prepare to fill up on Goan goodies, on a stellar shopping spree or two. Start in Panaji with a wander around its atmospheric **municipal market** (p119) to drink chai amid the blur of bargaining. Step it up a notch with some upmarket shopping at the boutique shops of 18th June Rd and the lifestyle stores and bookshops scattered about town.

In North Goa, drop in to **Calangute** (p154) and **Baga** (p154) for a whole host of shopping options, from street stalls to air-conditioned mini-malls, with a few unique boutiques sandwiched in between.

On any given Wednesday, take a deep breath and launch yourself into the chaos of the **Anjuna flea market** (p168), where the hippie days of old collide with everything that typifies Goa today. Wait for Friday to hit manic local **Mapusa market** (p162), the biggest market-day event in the whole stay, and try to drop in on picturesque **Siolim** (p173), where crustaceans are sold along the Chapora River each morning and St Anthony's Chapel bursts to life every Wednesday morning as fresh-produce vendors pour in.

Down in South Goa, where life still operates at a laid-back pace, take in the atmosphere of the covered **MC New Market** (p183) in Margao.



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