

# South Goa



South Goa, bounded to the north by the wide Zuari River and to the south by the neighbouring state of Karnataka, could well be seen as the quieter, shyer sister of her older, party-friendly North Goa sibling. Though the resorts have made it here too – Colva and Cavelossim being the two biggest – the pace never reaches the frenetic levels of Calangute or Candolim further north, and the resorts still peter out quickly into palm groves and paddy fields.

At the region's northern end stands shabby, workaday Vasco da Gama, its biggest city and major port. Further south you'll find Margao, the region's other main urban conurbation and administrative and transport hub. What Margao lacks in sights, it makes up for in its easygoing atmosphere, with all the bustle, but none of the hassle, of a true Indian town.

Taking to the coast, the northern half of the region, from the Zuari River down to the Sal River, is the most developed. The coast is punctuated with top-end five-star resorts, which, for all their sins, have managed to keep the beautiful shoreline free from midrange concrete-block development. Looming large on the traveller radar are uncharming Colva – a favourite among domestic tourists – and only slightly more appealing Cavelossim – a big winner with package-holiday Brits.

Below the Sal River, things slow down considerably, and Palolem, though well and truly 'discovered', remains an alluring and appealing backpacker favourite. Along this stretch you'll still be able to find the beach solitude you're seeking, and villages little changed by the impact of tourism. Inland you'll find some fabulous historic sights, plenty of bucolic bliss and Goa's most easily accessible wildlife reserve, making the south a redolent, rewarding and re-energising place to base yourself.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Laze the weeks, or months, away on still lovely, still laid-back **Palolem Beach** (p204)
- Head out into the hinterland to seek out the little-visited **Usgalimal rock carvings** (p189)
- Explore a colonial *palácio* (palace) relic or two in the village of **Chandor** (p187)
- Spend the afternoon with four-legged friends, playing with the puppies at **GAWT dogs' home** (p199) in Curchorem
- Seek out your own stretch of empty sands on the coastline somewhere between **Mobor** (p201) and **Varca** (p198).



