



Anjuna & North Goa

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Why Go?

Tucked between the Terekhol and Mandovi Rivers, North Goa encompasses the relentless action of Calangute and Baga, the happy hippiness of Arambol and Anjuna, the laid-back beaches of Aswem and Mandrem, and the luxury of boutique heritage hotels.

It was not, however, always this way. Until the 1960s Calangute was the sedate watering hole of the Portuguese elite, and the north coast was a simple string of fishing villages. Towards the end of the '60s came the heady days of naked revellers; next came the trance parties and, simultaneously, the package-holiday hordes.

Today, if you're here for spiritual bliss, don't go to Baga on a Friday night, it's more Ibiza than Inner Peace. Similarly, if you're looking to live it up, avoid Mandrem, whose liveliest moments are its ashtanga yoga sessions. Head inland, meanwhile, for enchanting villages, churches and temples. Choose carefully, then, and North Goa has delights aplenty, whatever your inclination.

When to Go

North Goa's party and holiday scene cranks up in November and lasts until March: the weather's picture-perfect, tourist facilities boom and beaches bustle. If something lower-key is what you're after, consider visiting in October or April; not everything will be open, but there are fewer crowds and lower prices.

From April to September, most tourist establishments close and resorts regain a local character: some long-stayers, especially in Arambol and Anjuna, swear this is the best time to be in Goa.

Arambol (Harmal)

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Arambol (also known as Harmal) first emerged in the 1960s as a mellow paradise for long-haired long-stayers. Today, things are still decidedly cheap and cheerful, with much of the village's budget accommodation arranged in simple little huts along the cliff sides. It's a bit more mainstream festival in style than in days gone by, and it may be that many of today's 'hippies' shave off their fortnight's beards and take off their tie-dye once they're back to their nine-to-five lives.

The village's main cove-like beach is gently curved and safe for swimming. Perhaps the reason why is that in recent years, Arambol has become popular among families with young children, who hang out happily with droves of uniformly dreadlocked, tattooed and creatively pierced individualists. Some people love Arambol for all this; others turn up their noses and move along, leaving today's long-stayers to enjoy the pretty beach and extensive 'alternative' shopping opportunities provided by nonstop stalls all the way down the beach road (known locally as 'Glastonbury St') and along round the cliff. If you're looking for a committed traveller vibe, this is the place to come. If you're seeking laid-back languidness, you might be better heading down the coast to Mandrem or Aswem instead.



Activities

Aside from yoga and beach lounging, the most popular pursuits in Arambol these days are **paragliding** and **kite surfing**. Several operators give lessons and rent equipment on the very south of Arambol beach; walk down there, or check out some noticeboards, to find out who's renting what this season.

Himalayan Iyengar Yoga Centre

YOGA

(www.hiyogacentre.com) Set amid the sand dunes of Arambol Beach is Himalayan Iyengar Yoga Centre, which runs five-day courses in hatha yoga from mid-November to mid-March. This is the winter centre of the Iyengar yoga school in Dharamkot, near Dharamsala in north India, and is run by the same teacher, Sharat Arora. Five-day courses for new and more-experienced students cost ₹3000, with additional days of instruction available at a reduced rate. Booking and reg-

istration must be done in person at the centre on Tuesdays at 2pm. Courses start on Fridays. There are also intensive two- to three-week courses for more experienced hatha yoga devotees and special short courses combining yoga with ayurvedic treatment. The centre also offers accommodation in the form of simple **huts** (₹300) for students. You'll find it a five-minute walk from the beach off the main road; look for the sign on the left-hand side as you head down to the beach road.



Sleeping

Accommodation in Arambol is plentiful, mainly of the budget variety, and it pays to trawl the cliffside to the north of Arambol's main beach for the best of numerous hut options. Here you can expect simple accommodation, mostly without private bathroom but with the benefit of incredible sea views (along with attendant breezes). Most cost around ₹500 to ₹700 in high season, and it's almost impossible to book in advance – simply turn up early in the day to check out who's checking out of your dream hut. The area around the Narayan Temple (take a left turn off the main road as you enter town) also has several guesthouses of similar quality.

Chilli's

HOTEL \$

(09921882424; Glastonbury St; d ₹500) This clean and simple place is one of Arambol's best non-beachside bargains. Chilli's offers 10 decent, no-frills rooms on the road down to the beach, all with attached bathroom, fan and a hot-water shower. There's an honour system for buying self-service bottled water from the fridge on the landing.

Shree Sai Cottages

BEACH HUTS \$\$

(02362823, 9420767358; shreesai_cottages@yahoo.com; huts without bathroom ₹400-500) A good example of what's on offer, Shree Sai has simple, cute, sea-facing huts a short walk north from the main Arambol Beach, with lovely views out over the water and a calm, easygoing vibe.

Om Ganesh

BEACH HUTS \$

(09404436447; r & huts without bathroom ₹800) Popular huts, especially those on the sea-side of the coastal path. The seaside Om Ganesh restaurant is also a great place for lunch or dinner, with almost everything you can think of on the menu (if you can manage to decode entries such as 'gokomadi' in