



# Panaji & Central Goa

## Includes »

Panaji.....	111
West of Panaji.....	124
Old Goa.....	126
Divar Island .....	133
Goa Velha.....	134
Talaulim .....	135
Pilar .....	135
Ponda .....	135
Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary .....	140
Molem & Around .....	141
Tambdi Surla .....	142
Hampi .....	143
Around Hampi .....	148
Hospet.....	149

## Why Go?

However much you do like to be beside the seaside, the attractions of central Goa are as quintessentially Goan as a dip in the Arabian Sea. What hedonism is to the north and relaxation is to the south, culture, scenery and history are to this central portion of the state, eased in between the Mandovi and Zuari Rivers.

Panaji (or Panjim, its former Portuguese name, by which it's still commonly known) is Goa's lazy-paced state capital, perfect for a stroll in the Latin Quarter, while just down the road is Old Goa, the 17th century's 'Rome of the East'.

Top this off with visits to temples and spice plantations around Ponda, two of Goa's most beautiful wildlife sanctuaries, time-untouched inland islands, and India's second-highest waterfall, and it would be possible to spend a week here without making it to a single beach.

## When to Go

Central Goa is less about beaches than the south and north of the state, making it less dependent on the high season. October and April are both good, cool, lower-priced times of year to visit Panaji and its surroundings, particularly if you're planning on a lot of sight-seeing; October, moreover, is the best time for wildlife-watching in the region's reserves. If, however, you're looking for ebullient religiosity, Easter, Christmas and the Feast of St Francis Xavier on December 3 make great times to experience Old Goa at its most atmospheric – and most packed.

## Best Places to Eat

- » Upper House, Panaji (p120)
- » Sher-E-Punjab, Panaji (p120)
- » Vihar Restaurant, Panaji (p121)
- » Mango Tree, Hampi (p147)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Casa Nova, Panaji (p119)
- » Backwoods Camp (p142)
- » Goa Marriott Resort (p124)
- » Mayfair Hotel, Panaji (p118)

## Panaji

0832 / POP 98,915

Slung along the banks of the wide Mandovi River, Panaji (also still widely known by its former Portuguese name Panjim), Goa's small and spritely state capital since 1843, boasts its own laid-back brand of originality. Purpose-built neat and tidy by its former Portuguese colonisers, the city's inhabitants have adapted its European-flavoured legacy to suit their affluent and easygoing needs. Nowhere here will you find the rush and hustle of most Indian cities; the Panaji pace is steadfastly stately, its streets are wide and tree-lined and its centre refreshingly free from hawkers and tricksters.

The city's architecture is the surest sign that Goa evolved independently of the rest of India. In the small old quarters of Fontainhas and Sao Tomé, winding alleyways are lined with Portuguese-style houses, boasting distinctive red-tiled roofs, wooden window shutters and rickety balconies decorated with bright pots of petunias. Here, whitewashed churches lurk down laneways, a short wander from technicolour Hindu temples.

### History

The land on which Panaji stands today was for centuries little more than a handful of fishing settlements, known to the 12th-century ruling Kadambas as Pahajani, 'the land that does not flood'.

In the late 15th century Goa came under the control of the Muslim sultan Yusuf Adil Shah, who built five hilltop forts and his own fortified summer palace here, protected by 55 cannons and conceived to guard the



### IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

In any emergency, anywhere in Goa, call 108. This will connect you to an operator who will put you through to the police, ambulance or fire services.

mouth of the Mandovi River against attackers. It's thought that Panaji's name might be a derivation of an Urdu reference to these five forts: *panchima afsugani*, 'five enchanted castles'.

When the Portuguese nobleman Afonso de Albuquerque arrived in Goa in 1510, he quickly set about conquering the palace and forts, and by the end of the year it was his. Leaving it almost untouched, however, the conquerors' efforts were instead now concentrated on aggrandising their new capital, Ela (now Old Goa), further east up the river.

For the next 300 years Panaji remained little more than a small and scruffy seafaring village, only notable for its church, where Portuguese sailors stopped off to give thanks to the heavens for having survived the perilous voyage to India. However, as conditions in Old Goa became increasingly desperate (see p126), the land began to support increasing numbers of refugees from the capital, until finally, in 1759 the viceroy moved to Panjim, where he took the old Idalcaon's Palace as his own residence, today the Secretariat.

By the early 19th century the city was taking shape. In 1834 Panjim became known as Nova Goa, and in 1843 was finally recognised by the Portuguese government as Goa's

### ABBÉ FARIA

Beside Panaji's Secretariat Building, what looks like a scene from a Hammer House of Horror hit is actually a testament in statue form to one of Goa's most famous exports: 18th-century Candolim-born Abbé Faria, displayed in full dramatic throes, 'pouncing', as Graham Greene once noted, 'like a great black eagle on his mesmerised female patient'.

Abbé Faria, born the son of a monk and a nun in a Candolim mansion in 1756, is one of history's fabulously enigmatic figures, having hovered handsomely on the sidelines of the greatest events of the 18th century and flirted with its main players (the Portuguese royal family, Robespierre, Marie Antoinette and Napoleon being just some of them), somehow ingratiating himself with every successive regime while remaining an elusive outsider, caught in a world of black magic and esoteric pursuits. He was considered the 'father of modern hypnotism' for his explanations on the power of suggestion – uncharted territory at the time. Next time you see a stage hypnotist parading the tricks of the trade, watch too for the ghost of shape-shifting Custodio Faria, flitting restively in the wings.