



North Goa

Includes ➔

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Candolim, Sinquerim & Fort Aguada | 119 |
| Calangute & Baga | 127 |
| Anjuna | 135 |
| Mapusa | 140 |
| Vagator & Chapora | 143 |
| Siolim | 148 |
| Morjim | 149 |
| Aswem | 150 |
| Mandrem | 151 |
| Arambol (Harmal) | 153 |
| Inland Bardez & Bicholim | 156 |

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Go With the Flow (p132)
- ➔ Thalassa (p147)
- ➔ La Plage (p151)
- ➔ Villa Blanche Bistro (p141)
- ➔ Café Chicolatti (p124)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Siolim House (p149)
- ➔ Wanderers Hostel (p150)
- ➔ Jungle Hostel (p145)
- ➔ Mandala (p152)
- ➔ Marbella Guest House (p124)

Why Go?

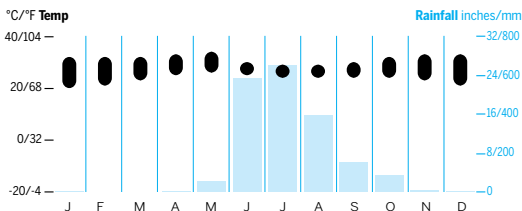
North Goa is the Goa you might have heard all about: the crazy nightlife, Goan trance, hippie markets and yoga retreats. If you like a fast pace and plenty to do, this is the place.

The region is framed by two great rivers – the Mandovi in the south and the Terekhol in the north – and in between is some 35km of golden beaches, interrupted only by the occasional rocky headland and the mouth of the broad Chapora River. Calangute and Baga are the epicentre of the region, with one of the few beaches still humming in the low season. Anjuna, with its famous Wednesday market, and Vagator still exude some hippy cool and party vibe, while the laid-back beaches of Morjim, Aswem and Mandrem are low-key but burgeoning family-friendly resorts with some flashy beachfront huts. In the far north, Arambol is a popular budget traveller enclave with cheap cliff-top accommodation and paragliding.

It's not for everyone, but if you like to dance, practice yoga or meditation, shop and eat well, it's hard to beat.

When to Go

Anjuna



Nov–Mar High season; fine weather, beach snacks and yoga classes

mid-Dec–early Jan Crowds and prices peak but Christmas and NYE parties are legendary.

Oct & Apr Shoulder season; good weather, fewer crowds and cheaper rooms.

Panaji to Fort Aguada

Heading north from Panaji you can either take the expansive four-lane Mandovi River bridge and main highway through Porvorim to Mapusa (or detour west to the beaches via Saligao), or try the more scenic 'back road' along the north bank of the Mandovi to Fort Aguada. The latter option allows you to shortcut across the river on the free vehicle ferry to Betim.

Reis Magos

Travelling west from Betim, turn left at the crossroads in the small village of **Verem** and continue about 1.5km to tiny Reis Magos (Three Wise Men) village, notable for its 16th-century church and Goa's oldest and best preserved fort.

Opened to the public in 2012 as a cultural centre, **Reis Magos Fort** (☎ 0832-2904649; www.reismagosfort.com; adult/student/child ₹50/25/free, Sun & holidays ₹10; ☀ 11am-sunset) overlooks the narrowest point of the Mandovi River estuary, making it easy to appreciate the strategic importance of the site. It was originally built in 1551, after the north bank of the river came under Portuguese control, and was rebuilt in 1703, in time to assist the desperate Portuguese defence against the Hindu Marathas (1737-39). It was then occupied by the British army in 1799 when they requisitioned Reis Magos, Cabo Raj Bhavan and Fort Aguada in anticipation of a possible attack by the French.

After the British withdrawal in 1813 the Reis Magos fort gradually lost importance, and was eventually abandoned. Like Fort Aguada nearby, the fort was turned into a prison in 1900 until it was abandoned again in 1993.

In 2011 the fort underwent extensive restoration and is now a cultural and heritage centre with exhibition spaces, including a gallery of works by cartoonist Mario Miranda and a room devoted to the history of the fort and its restoration. You can wander the ramparts for great views and inspect the original cannons pointing out over the Mandovi.

Reis Magos Church (☀ 9am-noon & 4-5.30pm Mon-Sat, service 8am Sun) was built below the fortress walls in 1555, shortly after the construction of the fort itself. A Franciscan seminary was later added, and over the years it became a significant seat of learning.

The seminary is gone but the church is well worth a look, with its steep steps up from the road and fine views of the Mandovi River from the main doors. Outside the church, the lions portrayed in relief at the foot of the steps show signs of Hindu influence, and a crown tops off the facade. The colourful interior contains the tombs of three viceroys, including Dom Luis de Ataíde, famous for holding 100,000 Muslim attackers – along with their 2000 elephants – at bay for 10 months in 1570, with his own force of just 7000 men.

Reis Magos is famous for the colourful **Three Kings Festival** on 6 January, when the story of the three wise men is recreated, with young local boys acting the parts of the Magi, complete with gifts for the infant Jesus.

Nerul (Coco) Beach

Nerul Beach (also known as Coco Beach), where the Nerul River meets the Mandovi, affords a great view across to Miramar and Panaji in Central Goa and is popular with day-trippers. The beach itself and the murky tidal waters are not much to look at, but it has a slight air of isolation as it can only be reached by a narrow one-way road through paddy fields.

Boat operators hang out at the beach, ready to take you on dolphin-spotting trips along the estuary, and there are a couple of restaurants on the beachfront.

There's not much reason to stay here, unless you're checking in to the swanky **Coco Shambhala** (www.cocoshambhala.com; villa per week ₹200,000; 🍷🍷), a luxurious collection of four villas, each of which come with their own private jetpool, and car and driver.

Candolim, Sinquerim & Fort Aguada

Candolim's long and languid beach, which curves to join smaller Sinquerim Beach to the south, is largely the preserve of slow-basting package tourists from the UK, Russia and, increasingly, elsewhere in India. It's fringed with an unabating line of beach shacks, all offering sunbeds and shade in exchange for your custom.

Back from the beach and running parallel to it, bustling Fort Aguada Rd is among the best resort strips in Goa for shops and services, and is home to dozens of restaurants and bars that awaken each evening to