



# Goa

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Upper House (p133)
- ➔ Fiesta (p145)
- ➔ La Plage (p152)
- ➔ Plantain Leaf (p145)
- ➔ Seafood at seasonal beach shacks (all over)

## Best Beaches

- ➔ Palolem (p161)
- ➔ Mandrem (p152)
- ➔ Cola Beach (p160)
- ➔ Anjuna (p146)
- ➔ Arambol (p153)

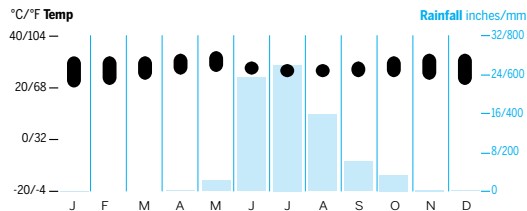
## Why Go?

Goa is like no other state in India. It may be the Portuguese colonial influence, the endless beaches, the glorious whitewashed churches or the relaxed culture of *susegad* – a uniquely Goan term that translates loosely to ‘laid-backness’ and is evident in all aspects of daily life and the Goan people themselves.

But Goa is far more than its old-school reputation as a hippie haven or its relatively new status as a package-holiday beach getaway. Goa is as beautiful and culturally rich as it is tiny and hassle-free, so you can go birdwatching in a butterfly-filled forest, marvel at centuries-old cathedrals, venture out to white-water waterfalls or meander the capital’s charming alleyways. Add a dash of Portuguese-influenced food and architecture, infuse with a colourful blend of religious traditions, pepper with parties, and you’ve got a heady mix that makes Goa easy to enjoy and extremely hard to leave.

## When to Go

### Goa (Panaji)



**Early Nov** Post-monsoon, the shacks and beach huts are up but the crowds are still down.

**Early Dec** Festivals, Christmas spirit and great weather, before the peak prices and crowds.

**Mar** Carnival and Easter celebrations as the season winds down.

## MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Dabolim Airport handles all flights, Margao (Madgaon) Railway Station is the state's largest and best connected; Mapusa, Panaji and Margao bus terminals for long-distance rides.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population:** 1.46 million
- ➔ **Area:** 3702 sq km
- ➔ **Capital:** Panaji (Panjim)
- ➔ **Telephone code:** ☎0832
- ➔ **Main languages:** Konkani, Marathi, English and Hindi
- ➔ **Sleeping prices:** \$ below ₹1200, \$\$ ₹1200 to ₹4000, \$\$\$ above ₹4000

## Top Tips

- ➔ Don't swim wasted!
- ➔ If you can handle the Christmas and New Year crowds, this is a fun time but book well ahead and expect to pay for the privilege.

## Resources

- ➔ **Goa's English dailies** ([www.navhindtimes.in](http://www.navhindtimes.in), [www.oheraldo.in](http://www.oheraldo.in)) For news.
- ➔ **Goa Tourism** ([www.goa-tourism.com](http://www.goa-tourism.com)) Good background and tour info.
- ➔ **Goacom** ([www.goacom.com](http://www.goacom.com)) Goa's news and views.
- ➔ **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/india/goa](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/india/goa)) For planning advice, author recommendations, traveller reviews and insider tips.

## Food & Drink

Goan cuisine is a tantalising fusion of Portuguese and South Indian flavours. Goans tend to be hearty meat and fish eaters, and fresh seafood is a staple, as is the quintessential Goan lunch 'fish-curry-rice': fried mackerel steeped in coconut, tamarind and chilli sauce. Traditional dishes include vindaloo (fiery dish in a marinade of vinegar and garlic) or *xacuti* (a spicy chicken or meat dish cooked in red coconut sauce). For dessert try the layered bebinca.

The traditional Goan drink is *feni*, a double-distilled fiery liquor made from the cashew fruit or palm toddy.

## DON'T MISS

There's little chance of missing the **beach** – much of Goa's 100km of Arabian Sea coastline has some spectacular stretches. Dining on **fresh seafood** at one of the many beach shacks up and down the coast is a must. Goa has a fascinating colonial **history** that also shouldn't be missed: set aside some time to explore evocative Panaji (Panjim), Old Goa, Quepem and Chandor.

## Top State Festivals

- ➔ **Feast of the Three Kings** (☺ 6 Jan, Chandor, p157. & Reis Magos) Boys re-enact the story of the three kings bearing gifts for Christ.
- ➔ **Shigmotsav (Shigmo) of Holi** (☺ Feb/Mar, statewide) Goa's version of the Hindu festival Holi sees coloured powders thrown about and parades in most towns.
- ➔ **Sabado Gordo** (☺ Feb/Mar, Panaji, p132) A procession of floats and street parties on the Saturday before Lent.
- ➔ **Carnival** (☺ Mar, statewide) A four-day festival kicking off Lent; the party's particularly jubilant in Panaji (p132).
- ➔ **Fama de Menino Jesus** (☺ 2nd Mon in Oct, Colva, p158) Colva's Menino Jesus statue is paraded about town.
- ➔ **Feast of St Francis Xavier** (☺ 3 Dec, Old Goa, p135) A 10-day celebration of Goa's patron saint.
- ➔ **Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception** (☺ 8 Dec, Margao, Panaji, p129) Fairs and concerts around Panaji's famous church.