



PLAY

# Goa, Three Ways

LAID-BACK BEACHES, PORTUGUESE-ERA MONUMENTS, A WELLNESS FOCUS—THIS INDIAN ESCAPE, AN HOUR'S FLIGHT FROM MUMBAI, HAS A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.

BY AARTI VIRANI



The low-key scene at Ashwem Beach.

Goa is India's smallest state (slightly larger than Rhode Island), on the rugged western Konkan Coast along the Arabian Sea. Yet it draws six million tourists to its palm-fringed shores each year.

"Though we're part of mainland India, we might as well have been an island," says Dr. Luis Dias, a historian who leads walking tours throughout Goa, hinting at the source of his home state's appeal. The former Spice Route colony was an outpost for the Portuguese, who ended their 450-year occupation in the 1960s, but Iberian influences remain.

Here, we map out itineraries for exploring this enchanting seaside playground, whether your interest is in romance, wellness or family time—plus, we highlight where you can pick up souvenirs to remember your boho-chic vacation by. Your options for getting around include taking advantage of the local bus network, enlisting your resort's concierge to help you hire a car and driver (for about \$25\* a day, it's a bargain) or riding a scooter, a popular mode of transport here. For shorter distances, you can hail a cab or auto rickshaw.

## FOR ROMANCE SEEKERS

Uncluttered stretches are nearly impossible to find along Goa's crowded coastline, which is why the secluded **Ashwem Beach**, sandwiched between its more bustling counterparts, Mandrem and Morjim, is such a gem. The sparsely populated mile-long stretch is perfect for lazy dips for two in the water. It's also a 10-minute drive from the **Morjai Temple**, an elegant ode of floral and geometric motifs to a local Hindu goddess. For an intimate take on your surroundings, you can book a heritage tour with the aforemen-



tioned **Dr. Luis Dias** (011-91-832-222-4642; [luisdias.wordpress.com](http://luisdias.wordpress.com); walks, from \$30 a couple), whose bespoke itineraries may include a stroll through the nooks of the Latin Quarter in Panaji—Goa's northern capital city, where Dias spent much of his childhood—and an informed take on the azulejos, or ceramic tiles, that line the walls of the **Goa State Central Library** (*Sanskriti Bhavan, Patto, Panaji*; 011-91-832-240-4500), etched with verses from classic Portuguese literature. At sundown, make your way to **Barbeque** (opposite Manipal Hospitals, Vainguinim Beach, Panaji; 011-91-832-245-4545; dinner for two, \$40), an outdoor seafood restaurant on Vainguinim Beach that serves

#### SOUVENIR SUGGESTION

German-Italian designer Martino Caramia brings Ibiza-inspired swagger to Indian heritage textiles at **The Flame Store** (1255 Anna Vaddo, next to Lawande Supermarket, Candolim; 011-91-992-380-2466), a clothing emporium filled with handloom skirts



A boat on Palolem Beach.

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spiced tiger prawn sizzlers. If you'd prefer a buzzier spot, there's **The Black Sheep Bistro** (Swami Vivekananda Rd., Panaji; 011-91-914-619-0901; [blacksheepbistro.in](http://blacksheepbistro.in); dinner for two, \$30), a relatively new entrant in Goa's dining scene. In the capital's center, the lounge executes an impressive Indo-Western double play (paneer caprese, Goan-accented bouillabaisse) paired with gin cocktails. From there, hop in a cab to end the evening at **Cantare** (7/72 B Cruz Vaddo, Saligao; 011-91-797-254-8319; dinner for two, \$12), a former residential bungalow turned bar in the village of Saligao, just outside North Goa's beach belt. Its warm interiors turn into the backdrop for twice-weekly jazz concerts, with views of surrounding rice paddies.

## FOR WELLNESS WANDERERS

Holidaying yogis can find their flow, thanks to morning classes at **Parinama** (south end of Palolem Beach, river side,

Ourem Palace, Canacona; 011-91-860-500-7600; [parinamayogastudio.com](http://parinamayogastudio.com); classes, from \$6 a person), an open-air studio that welcomes drop-ins. To pick up the pace, you can choose from a menu of adrenaline-pumping fun at **Vaayu Ocean Adventures** (Ashwem Beach Rd., opposite Holy Cross Chapel, Ashwem Beach, Mandrem; 011-91-985-005-0403; [vaayuoceanadventures.in](http://vaayuoceanadventures.in); rates for excursions vary), a water-sports outfit that offers wakeboarding, surfing and other guided activities. To refuel, take a 30-minute drive to **Natti's Naturals** (Anjuna Rd., Mazal Waddo, Anjuna; 011-91-703-824-6918; lunch for two, \$15), the brainchild of an Austrian-Punjabi naturopath, whose eclectic menu features a gluten-free orange and ginger cake; the more indulgent offerings here are served with mounds of toasted *pão*, or yeasty Portuguese rolls. Finally, don't miss an Ayurvedic cooking class, steered by millennia-old traditions that regard food as healing medicine, at



Natti's Naturals' vegan meze platter.

**Swan Yoga** (101/4 Bairro Alto, Assagao; 011-91-800-736-0677; [swan-yoga-go.com](http://swan-yoga-go.com); classes, from \$15 a person), nestled in scenic Assagao, often referred to as North Goa's "valley of flowers."

## SOUVENIR SUGGESTION

Handmade soaps and upcycled furniture are the draw at **Paper Boat Collective** (H. No. 248, Bella Vista, Sangolda; 011-91-832-652-1248), an eco-friendly home-décor boutique.

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Fort Aguada and its lighthouse look out on the Arabian Sea.

## FOR FAMILY EXPLORERS

Some of Goa's most charismatic residents are pods of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, and they can be viewed on an outing with **John's Boat Tours** (near Newton's Super Market, Candolim; 011-91-832-652-0190; [johnboatours.com/tours](http://johnboatours.com/tours), from \$15 a person). The four-hour excursion includes a barbecue lunch and glimpses of **Fort Aguada**, a 17th-century Portuguese citadel. Back on land, the **Mario Gallery** (Pedru Martina, opposite Toto's Bar & Restaurant, Gauro Vaddo, Calangute; 011-91-832-652-1611; [mario.demiranda.com](http://mario.demiranda.com)) showcases creations by the nationally acclaimed cartoonist and illustrator Mario de Miranda, raised in the vicinity. Try a hands-on approach to art on Goa's tranquil southern side with a crash course in ceramics at **Carpe Diem** (House No. 81/2, Godinho House, Majorda; 011-91-832-288-1035; [carpediemgoa.com](http://carpediemgoa.com); classes, from \$10 a person). For a child-friendly option in North Goa, head to **Maruti Temple** (Nanu Tarkar Pednekar Rd., Mapusa), a 150-year-old site that honors the Hindu monkey god, Hanuman. During periods of Portuguese rule, the deity was covertly worshipped.

 Find extra tips for your Goa getaway in the *Endless Vacation*® magazine app. See page 2 for details!

Catch your breath at **Goa's Ark** (907 Market Rd., Monteiro Vaddo, Anjuna; 011-91-914-505-0494; [goas-ark.com](http://goas-ark.com); dinner for two, \$20). You can sip a beer or a passion-fruit smoothie while the little ones frolic at the on-site petting zoo, well within eyeshot of your perch. 🐾

## SOUVENIR SUGGESTION

Browse a trove of bohemian baubles, crafted from cowrie shells and turquoise beads, at **Artjuna** (940 Market Rd., Monteiro Vaddo, Anjuna; 011-91-832-227-4794; [artjuna.com](http://artjuna.com)), a shop and café near Anjuna Beach. There are tree houses where the kids can monkey around while you shop.

## STAY RCI® AFFILIATED RESORTS IN GOA INCLUDE:

### Karma Royal Palms 3594

There's little need to leave this lush property, thanks to on-site entertainment, a restaurant, a grocery store and a full-service spa. *Colva-Benaulim Rd., Benaulim*  
**MEMBER REVIEW:** "Lovely pool, and our apartment was very clean and comfy."

### Karma Royal Benaulim 3726

Parents are free to roam—the resort is in the heart of Goa—while toddlers play at the on-site day care. *Near Taj Exotica Calvaddo, Benaulim*  
**MEMBER REVIEW:** "Excellent staff and service."

### Karma Royal Haathi Mahal 4129

A 10-minute walk from the Arabian Sea, known for its dolphin-spotting. *Cavelossim, Mobor*  
**MEMBER REVIEW:** "Quiet and convenient."

### Karma Royal Monterio 3820

Exudes Mediterranean flare, with its all-white exterior and cobalt blue accents. *Arpora-Baga Rd., Baga, Bardez*  
**MEMBER REVIEW:** "We loved the pool."

For complete member reviews (as member reviews have been condensed) and additional resort listings, visit [RCI.com](http://RCI.com) or call 800-338-7777 (Weeks) or 877-968-7476 (Points). Club Members, please call your specific Club or RCI telephone number.

## NON-RCI AFFILIATED RESORTS

### Cidade de Goa

With its sea-facing rooms and 24-hour casino, this beach resort takes visual cues from a traditional Portuguese village. *Opposite Manipal Hospitals, Vainguinim Beach, Panaji*; 011-91-832-245-4545; [cidadedegoa.com](http://cidadedegoa.com); doubles from \$150 a night

### Coconut Creek Resort

A compact yet family-friendly retreat within reach of South Goa's many attractions. *Bimmut Ward, Bogmalo*; 011-91-832-253-8100; [coconutcreekgoa.com](http://coconutcreekgoa.com); doubles from \$85 a night