

Goin' to

Join the A-list babes for some serious

Why it's hip right now

Hurrah! Goa's finally thrown off its scruffy backpacker image and re-emerged as the Saint Tropez of India. These days it's the hottest place on the subcontinent, with chic boutique hotels such as the newly opened Vivenda dos Palhacos (0117-942 8476, i-escape.com) offering luxury in paradise. Sublime.

Celeb fans

Kate Moss is one of several celebs who like to chill on Goa's beaches. Earlier this year, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and their kids took time off from filming *A Mighty Heart* in Pune, India, to enjoy a break in Candolim, north Goa. And many Bollywood stars regard Goa as the perfect retreat after filming in the heat of Mumbai.

What to do in the day

When you've had enough of swimming and sunbathing on the talcum powder beaches, get ready to haggle. Don't miss the Wednesday flea market at Anjuna, alongside Anjuna beach. It's open to all and flooded with visitors from across the state. You can pick up clothes, spices and jewellery at rock-bottom prices, but only if you know how to bargain. Attempt a 'downward dog' - if you're brave enough - in the

region's top yoga academy, Purple Valley Yoga Retreat (00 91 832226 8364, yogagoa.com). It's recently opened an Ayurveda centre as well, so you can get your vata and pita in balance while you're at it.

Romantics can charter a yacht from Palolem in the south to watch dolphins. Palolem Beach Resort, on Palolem beach, can arrange the hire of yachts (00 91 83464 3054, email yogesh@goa1.dot). And don't miss a simple fish curry on the sand, using locally grown spices and rice as well as fresh fish of the day. Martin's Corner (00 91 83228 80061) off the Colva-Vasco Road in Betalbatim, serves some of the tastiest ones.

What to do at night

Watching the sunset with a cocktail in your hand is the best way to start the evening. Try Nilaya Hermitage, (00 91 832227 6793, nilayahermitage.com), Goa's most exclusive hotel. Rooms cost from £150 per night.

Titos (00 91 832227 5028, titosgoa.com) in Baga, north Goa, is one of the state's most established venues, with fire shows and dance and ghost parties. The party often ends up spilling out onto the beach.

Or watch the Olive Ridley turtles hatching on the very quiet Morjim beach, Pernam, Taluda, in the north of Goa. There's a viewing platform at The Centre For Environment Education (goatourism.org).



Barefoot pioneer: Kate Moss has helped to put Goa in vogue

Where to stay

Check out the very different Hobbit hotel (0117-9428476, i-escape.com), set in a cave carved into the cliffs above South Anjuna beach, with hammocks, a plunge pool and a rooftop terrace. Rooms are available for four to six people from £100 a night.

Or if you're feeling artistic, make for Villa Rivercat (00 91 832224 7928, villarivercat.com) in northern Goa. It's a laid-back retreat designed to encourage creativity and inspiration, with rooms from only £10 per night.



Boutique chic: the Vivenda dos Palhacos...



...a luxurious hotel both inside and out

Goa

is seaside hedonism

How much it all costs

Trailfinders (0845 0586060, trailfinders.com) offers tailor-made holidays to Goa from £431. A fortnight at four-star Fort Aguada Beach Resort, in the north of Goa, costs £759, including flights and transfers. British Airways flights to Goa with one stop in Mumbai cost around £622, including tax (0871 2225969, lastminute.com).

Save the world

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