

History

PREHISTORY

Historians are at odds regarding the origins of the area's first semi-nomadic settlers. Some believe that the first Goans arrived as migrants from Africa, while others say that they were from eastern Asia, or perhaps were a northern tribe forced southwards by instability in their homeland.

As the lifestyle of the early Goans became more settled, formal agriculture developed and villages sprang up. The people became almost self-sufficient in food production and they soon began to look outwards from the confines of their coastal territory, establishing links with the other peoples of southern India. Around 2400 BC the society would have been profoundly altered, in particular by the arrival of Aryan migrants from the north, who brought with them the early strands of Hinduism. A second wave of Aryans, which may have included important groups – the Bhojas, Chediyas and Saraswat Brahmins – who came to precedence over the coming centuries, migrated southwards in around 700 BC.

According to legend, Lord Krishna was enchanted by the land that is now Goa, and named it Govepuri, after the cows that belonged to charming milkmaids he encountered there.

EARLY HISTORY

During the Mauryan empire (321–184 BC), Goa became part of an administrative area known as Kuntala. During this period Buddhism arrived on India's west coast, brought by a monk named Punna, who resided near modern-day Zambaulim in south Goa. With the rapid demise of the Mauryans after the death of Emperor Ashoka in 232 BC, Goa came under the control of the Marathis, who ruled for about two centuries before being ousted in 50 BC by the temporarily powerful Anand-Chuttus.

Within a century Goa had changed hands again, this time becoming part of the powerful Satavahana empire, which controlled the whole of the west coast of India. During this period Goa emerged as an international trading centre, and evidence exists of regular trade with Africa, the Middle East and even the Romans.

Further dynastic upheaval during the 2nd century AD saw Goa passing to the Bhojas, who ruled from the city of Chandrapur, near the present

Salcete taluka (district) derives its name from the Sanskrit word *sassast*, meaning '66', after the 66 Brahmin families who originally settled there. Similarly, Tiswadi (from *tis* or *tees*, meaning '30') is named for the 30 families who chose Tiswadi taluka as their home.

LET THERE BE GOA

According to Hindu legend, Goa and the Konkan coastline were created by the god Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. After many years of fighting to avenge the murder of his father, Parasurama finally came to the Sahyadri mountains (Western Ghats), that now form the border between Goa and Karnataka. In search of a completely pure piece of land on which to carry out sacrifices, Parasurama stood atop the Western Ghats and shot an arrow into the Arabian Sea below the mountains and commanded the waves to retreat to the point where the arrow landed. The arrow fell, it is said, at the point where Benaulum village now stands (*baan* meaning 'arrow', *ali* meaning 'village'), and the stretch of coastline that was revealed as the waves receded is the coastal plain of Goa. Parasurama performed his fire sacrifice in the north of the country (modern-day Pernem), and then peopled his new land with 96 Brahmin families.

TIMELINE 300 BC

Goa under Ashoka Mauryan rule

AD 1050

As the Kadambas rise to power, the capital shifts from Chandrapur to Govepuri (currently known as Goa Velha)

village of Chandor in south Goa, for nearly 300 years. Again, during the periods of peace, trade blossomed, but towards the end of the dynasty, power began to be ceded to other smaller states that had come to prominence in the area, including the Konkani Mauryans and the Kadambas. At the end of the 6th century the powerful Chalukyas of Badami succeeded in bringing the whole area under their control. Despite the change of power, the Kadambas managed to retain their position, administering the area as a feudatory state to the new Chalukya rulers.

In the middle of the 8th century the Chalukyas were defeated by the Shilaharas, who held on to power for the next 200 years. There was considerable infighting, but the Shilaharas appear to have thrived until eventually challenged in 973 by their old enemies, the Chalukyas. The ensuing struggle between the adversaries gave the Kadambas (who had served both of them as local chieftains) a chance to claim the area. After several attempts, the Kadamba leader Shastadeva captured the capital of Chandrapur in 979. The Chalukyas, although still the most powerful empire on the west coast, were content to let the Kadambas rule for them, and thus began one of the most glorious periods in the history of Goa.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE KADAMBAS

Finally, Goa had some stability, for although the Kadambas were feudatories to the Chalukyas, they succeeded in hanging on to power for 300 years. During this period Chandrapur grew into a large and beautiful city; it was used as the capital until around 1050, when a newer port on the Zuari River, known as Govepuri or Gopaka (now called Goa Velha), was adopted.

A unique mixture of cultural influences centred on Goa, with merchants coming from as far afield as Malabar, Bengal and Sumatra. In contrast with what was to come, this was a period of religious tolerance. Under the patronage of the Kadambas, Hinduism flourished and Goa became a pilgrimage destination with large temples and prestigious academic institutions. The only Kadamba structure to survive the eras that were to follow is Tambdi Surla Mahadeva Temple, which was saved by its remote jungle location.

THE MUSLIM RULE OF THE BAHMANIS

The peace was shattered at the beginning of the 14th century by a series of Muslim invasions from the north. In 1312 Govepuri, and much else along with it, was destroyed; 15 years later the Muslims returned under Mohammed Tughlaq and the old capital of Chandrapur was levelled. Raids continued until finally, in 1352, Goa came under the permanent Muslim rule of the Bahmanis.

Although the Bahmanis held Goa for a quarter of a century, they were in constant conflict with the mighty Vijayanagar empire, which had its capital at Hampi and controlled much of southern India. The persecution of Hindus in Goa at this time forced many to flee south until, in 1378, the Vijayanagar army finally succeeded in wresting Goa from the Bahmanis.

A period of peace followed, accompanied by excellent trade. In particular, Goa was used to import Arab horses for the Vijayanagar cavalry, while spices flowed as export goods back to the Arab countries.

In the early 15th century the ousted Bahmanis made concerted attempts to win back their old territory. In all, four expeditions were mounted, the last of which, under Mahmud Gawan, struck in 1469. Despite a lightning attack from land and sea, it took three years to bring Goa back under control, and it became part of the Bahmani kingdom again in 1472. As if in revenge for the effort that had been expended, the Bahmanis wreaked havoc; Hindu temples and the capital Govepuri caught the brunt of it. With Govepuri in ruins and the waters near it badly silted up, the Bahmanis established a new capital, Gove, near Ela, on the Mandovi River.

There was little time for the Bahmanis to celebrate their success, for within 20 years the kingdom had become riven by dispute and it split into four factions. One, the kingdom of Bijapur under its ruler Yussuf Adil Shah, inherited Gove. He was so impressed by the new city that he made it his second capital, and in Ponda constructed Safa Shahouri Masjid, which still stands today.

ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

Almost before the city could adjust to its new-found prosperity, it was threatened again. In 1498 Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese sea captain, landed south of Goa at Calicut (present-day Kozhikode) on the Malabar Coast, 'seeking Christians and spices' with a view to undermining the Arab's monopoly of the spice trade. He didn't have much luck finding Christians, but there were spices in abundance.

A subsequent expedition managed to establish a small fortress in Cochin (present-day Kochi). In 1503 a nobleman named Afonso de Albuquerque sailed from Portugal to reinforce this base, and returned home full of enthusiasm for the opportunities on offer.

In 1506 Albuquerque was dispatched again with orders to take over as the second Portuguese viceroy of what amounted to little more than two fortresses, one at Cochin and the other at Cannanore (present-day Kannur). The voyage was long and it wasn't until 1508 that Albuquerque arrived in India. It was evident that a more permanent base was required on the Indian coastline and that the Portuguese needed to consolidate their presence in the area. Rumours were rife that the Arab rulers of the coastal states were concerned about Portuguese sea power and were planning to attack the Portuguese fleet.

Wasting little time, Albuquerque sailed for Goa, and in March 1510 attacked and occupied the main island in the river, where Panaji (formerly Panjim) and Old Goa stand today. Although the element of surprise had been on his side, his success was short-lived, for Yussuf Adil Shah soon recovered and counterattacked, driving him out barely two months later.

With the monsoon setting in, there was little that Albuquerque could do except withdraw his ships out of range of the enemy guns and find as much cover from the elements as possible. He and his men rode out the monsoon in miserable conditions before retreating down the coast to recover.

Albuquerque attacked again, and on 25 November (St Catherine's Day) he retook Goa. As a punishment to those who assisted the sultan in

Konkani was recognised as one of the official languages of India in 1992. It is believed to have been the result of the impact of Prakrit (the language of the Mauryan empire) on the local Dravidian language that was spoken by early Goans.

The Kadambas, whose name has become synonymous with main bus stations throughout Goa, were local feudatories of the Hoysala kingdom. They rose to power and ruled Goa for about 300 years.

During his time in Goa, Afonso de Albuquerque banned the Hindu practice of *sati*, the self-immolation of women on their husband's funeral pyre.

1352

Goa comes under rule of Muslim Bahmanis

1498

Portuguese captain Vasco da Gama arrives in Goa; he is the first European to reach India via the Cape of Good Hope

1510

Portuguese nobleman Afonso de Albuquerque defeats the forces of Yusuf Adil Shah

1560

The Inquisition begins its brutal 200 years of suppression of religious freedom

his defence of the city, Albuquerque ordered that all Muslim occupants of the city be put to death. He then set about fortifying the city and rebuilding the fort at Panaji.

Four months later, having put the new territory in order, Albuquerque departed on another voyage. During his absence there was a further attempt to recapture Goa, this time by Yussuf Adil Shah's son, Ismail Adil Shah. For several months the garrison managed to hold out until, reinforced by new arrivals from Portugal, they were able to establish a sound defence. In late 1512 Albuquerque returned victorious from having conquered Malacca and, organising the combined forces into two groups, attacked and defeated the Muslims.

After fortifying the colony, Albuquerque sailed west to consolidate his gains in the Gulf. He returned in 1513 in time to sign a treaty with the new ruler of Calicut and start on the serious work of laying out his new city.

Perhaps Albuquerque's greatest achievement during this period was the skilful political balancing act he performed. Both the Vijayanagar empire and the Bijapuris were potential threats, and Albuquerque played them off one against the other. The only bargaining tool he had was that both armies were keen to import horses (to use in attacks against each other); he turned this to financial as well as political advantage by making them promise that they would only buy their horses from him, thus making a tidy profit on the existing trade through Goa's ports.

In 1515 he was on the move again, this time to the Gulf, but it was his final voyage: he returned fatally ill. He died aboard his ship in Goa harbour on 15 December 1515, having been brought up on deck to see Goa one last time.

CONQUEST & EXPANSION

Although the initial threat to the Portuguese had been beaten off, their position was anything but secure. The conquistadors still held only the islands in the river estuary, while their enemies held the far banks to both the north and south.

An uncommonly good piece of luck fell to the Portuguese in 1520 when, after a spate of successes against the Muslims, the Hindus offered their conquests to the Portuguese. They swiftly occupied the areas of Ponda, Salcete and Bardez and, although the Muslims took most of the territory back fairly quickly, some parts, notably Rachol Fort, remained in Portuguese hands.

At this point political cunning did the trick; the Portuguese brought in Mir Ali, a rival for the Muslim throne, and threatened to support his bid. As a compromise, in 1543 the existing sultan ceded Bardez and Salcete permanently, on condition that Mir Ali was deported from the region. The areas that the Portuguese now held – Tiswadi, Bardez and Salcete – marked the extent of Portuguese territory in Goa for the next 250 years, and are now known as the Old Conquests (Velhas Conquistas).

In 1565 the balance of power that had existed in the region collapsed when a coalition of Muslim rulers finally crushed the Vijayanagar army at the Battle of Talikota. The subsequent sack of the Vijayanagar capital at Hampi is reputed to have taken several months.

With the Muslim kingdoms in alliance and rid of their greatest enemy, it was inevitable that the Portuguese would come under threat. In 1570 the combined forces of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Calicut besieged Goa with huge forces. Despite their overwhelming superiority in numbers, they failed to break the defence, and after a 10-month siege they gave up and withdrew.

CHRISTIANISATION OF GOA

Although a handful of priests had arrived in Goa with Albuquerque's fleet, and the Franciscans had managed to send a few friars in 1517, missionary work was relatively low-key in Goa for almost 30 years. Initially the approach was enlightened, and the religious conversion that did take place was unforced.

In 1541, following the arrival of a handful of zealots, laws were passed that all Hindu temples should be destroyed, along with strict laws forbidding the observance of Hindu rituals, and other regulations stating that only those who were baptised could retain the rights to their land.

In 1560 the Inquisition unleashed a period of nearly 200 years of brutal suppression and religious terrorism. During this period many Hindus fled across the Mandovi River into what is now Ponda, smuggling their religious statuary to safety and building temples to house them. Thousands died during this period at the whim of interrogators who sat around the 'Inquisition table', which is now kept at the Goa State Museum in Panaji.

Although the Roman Catholic Church had much to answer for, there were also undoubtedly many positive aspects to the work of the religious orders. By the middle of the 16th century, the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits, among others, were present in Goa. The missionaries established hospitals and schools and taught alternative methods of farming and forestry. They also masterminded much of the building work that was taking place; work on the Se Cathedral was commenced in 1560, and the Basilica of Bom Jesus was built between 1594 and 1605.

PORTUGAL FADES & THE MARATHAS ATTACK

At the same time that the most magnificent buildings of Old Goa were being constructed, Portugal's fortunes were beginning to wane.

In 1580, bankrupted by a disastrous campaign in North Africa, Portugal was annexed by Spain, and it was not until 1640 that the Portuguese regained independence. While this dealt an understandable blow to morale, finances and even manpower, a greater threat was the emergence of European rivals in the eastern oceans. In 1612 the Portuguese fleet was defeated off the coast of Surat, in western Gujarat, by the ships of the British East India Company, and the British suddenly became the power to be reckoned with in the Arabian Sea. The threat was eventually dealt with only by allowing the British to trade freely in all of Portugal's eastern ports, an agreement reached by the Convention of Goa in 1635.

By the early 1660s the Portuguese were also facing a threat from the east. Shivaji, the great leader of the Marathas, succeeded in taking the neighbouring territories of Bicholim and Pernem in 1664, before being

The first printing press in India was established in Old Goa in 1556 by the Jesuits.

At the first exposition of the Incorruptible Body in 1554, a Portuguese noblewoman by the name of Dona Isabel de Caron was so anxious to obtain a relic of St Francis Xavier that she bit off a toe on his right foot.

1664

The Marathas, under the leadership of Shivaji, take Bicholim and Pernem

1683

The Marathas under the leadership of Sambhaji (Shivaji's son) come dangerously close to Old Goa

1737

The Marathas, under the leadership of King Shahu (Shivaji's grandson), finally capture Bardez and Salcete in 1737

1739

The Portuguese and Marathas sign a peace treaty

forced to withdraw to deal with the Muslim leader Aurangzeb. His army was a constant worry around the Goan borders until his death in 1680.

In 1683 the Maratha army, now commanded by Shivaji's son, Sambhaji, got so close to Old Goa that defeat seemed inevitable. Ordering the coffin of St Francis Xavier to be opened, the viceroy laid the cane of office next to the saint's body and prayed for him to intercede. Miraculously, the Marathas withdrew at the last minute, again threatened by Mughal forces to their rear. The following year they took Chapora in Bardez taluka (district).

The Marathas returned again in 1737, taking the whole of Bardez, except for the forts at Aguada and Reis Magos, and the whole of Salcete, apart from Mormugao and Rachol. Finally a negotiated peace forced the Portuguese to hand over the territory of Bassein, near Mumbai (Bombay), in return for a Maratha withdrawal from Goa.

EXPANSION & DECLINE

The latter half of the 18th century saw both the expansion of the colony and the acceleration of its decline.

In 1764 the raja of Sonda, beset by his enemy Hyder Ali of Mysore, asked the Portuguese to occupy his lands in order to protect them. Although he intended the occupation to be temporary, the Portuguese obligingly moved into what today are Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona, and the acquisition became permanent.

Between 1781 and 1788 the northern talukas of Pernem, Bicholim and Satari were also added to the colony, bringing under Portuguese control the entire area that Goa occupies today.

At the same time, the character of the colony was changing enormously because of the repression of the religious orders (the Jesuits were banned in 1759) and the effective end of the Inquisition in 1774. Thus the new territorial acquisitions were spared the forced conversions and crusading Christianity that had been imposed on the Old Conquests. By this stage too, Old Goa, once a city of more than 200,000 inhabitants, was practically abandoned because of recurring disease. The senate was formally moved to Panjim (present-day Panaji) in 1835, although it was another eight years before the city officially became the capital.

In 1787 there was a short-lived attempt at revolt from within Goa. The conspirators in the Pinto Revolt were mainly Goan churchmen, disaffected at the unequal status of Goans in the church hierarchy. The revolt was discovered while it was still in the planning stages, and several of the leaders were tortured and put to death, while others were imprisoned or shipped off to Portugal (see p125).

END OF EMPIRE

While many uneducated Goans accepted the status quo, among the educated classes there was already a nascent independence movement. The first manifestations of this were a series of uprisings by a clan called the Ranes, who came from Satari taluka in the northeast. For more than 50 years there was sporadic violence dealt with by Portuguese viceroys with a mixture of military suppression and concessions. Finally in 1912, after 14 rebellions, the movement was crushed by military force.

THE POUND IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

Right at the end of the century, Goa was temporarily occupied without a shot being fired. The British, engaged in a struggle against the southern monarch Tipu Sultan (who had formed an alliance with the French), marched into Goa in 1797. Although they departed a year later, they were back in 1802, this time guarding against a possible invasion by the French. Despite repeated Portuguese protests, the British garrison remained in Goa until 1813. Although there was never any attempt to annex Goa, several years later (in 1839) the British government offered to buy Goa from the Portuguese for half a million pounds.

In 1910 when the Portuguese monarchy came to an end, it looked briefly as though the calls for self-determination were about to be answered. At the last moment, however, the proposed measures were withheld. The anger caused by this abrupt change in policy led to the emergence of a determined Goan independence movement, with figures like Luis de Menezes Braganza championing the cause. By the 1940s the Goan leaders were taking their example from the Independence movement across the border in British India.

On 18 June 1946 a demonstration in Margao (Madgaon) led to the public arrest of a prominent activist, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, after he had been threatened at gunpoint to stop him addressing the crowd. The event provided the incentive needed to motivate the people, and large-scale demonstrations were held.

Many activists were arrested, and in all an estimated 1500 people were incarcerated. A militant wing of the Independence movement was formed, which called itself Azad Gomantak Dal, and carried out a number of raids on police stations, public industries and stray security patrols.

On 10 June 1947 the Portuguese Minister of Colonies, Captain Teófilo Duarte, warned that the 'Portuguese flag will not fall down in India without some thousands of Portuguese, white and coloured, shedding their blood in its defence'.

When overtures by the newly independent Indian government were made to the Portuguese in 1953, the lack of any formal response made it apparent that the Portuguese had no intention of withdrawing. Consequently, on 11 June 1953, diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken off. The same year, Dr TB Cunha (dubbed the Father of Goan Nationalism) formed the Goa Action Committee, which used *satyagraha* (nonviolent protest). On 15 August 1954 a huge *satyagraha* commenced. Many were arrested, beaten and imprisoned.

Exactly a year later, as a mark of indignation at the treatment of the Goan *satyagrahis*, a second protest was organised, this time to be conducted by Indians from outside Goa.

On the morning of the rally more than 3000 protesters, including women and children, entered Goa at various points along the border with India. In response to this openly peaceful protest, Portuguese security forces charged the protesters with batons and opened fire. Some of the protesters were killed and hundreds more injured.

During this period India manoeuvred for international support, and tried to exert pressure on more established members of the UN to persuade

On 18 June 1946, Indian socialist leader Dr Ram Manohar Lohia launched a mass movement for civil liberties at a public meeting in Margao – 18th of June Rd in Panjim is so called to commemorate this event.

1781–1788

Talukas of Pernem, Bicholim and Satari are added to the colony, completing the area that Goa occupies today

1787

The unsuccessful Pinto revolt is attempted; its leaders are either tortured and executed, or shipped to Portugal

1843

Old Goa is abandoned and a new capital is officially established in Panjim

1953

Diplomatic relationships between Portugal and India collapse

Goa's first newspaper, *O Herald*, was launched in 1900. It is now called *Herald* (www.oheraldo.in).

the Portuguese to leave peacefully. India's prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in particular, was opposed to taking Goa by force, as he believed that this would jeopardise the whole ethos of achieving political aims by peaceful means. He also recognised that it was possible that Goans might not vote for independence if they were given a free choice.

In order to allay Goan fears, Nehru addressed the issue publicly:

Goa has a distinct personality, and we have recognised it. It will be a pity to destroy that individuality, and we have decided to maintain it. With the influx of time, a change may come. But it will be gradual and will be made by the Goans themselves. We have decided to preserve the separate identity of Goa in the Union of India and we hold to it firmly. No agitation against it will be to any purpose.

Although the pledge to respect Goa's integrity was upheld, Nehru could not resist the forces pushing for India to take Goa by force. During the night of 17 December 1961, Operation Vijay began with Indian troops crossing the border. Little resistance was met and by the next evening, troops were outside Panjim. There was a brief gunfight at Fort Aguada when a 'rescue operation' attempted to liberate a number of political prisoners, but to all intents the surrender itself was a mere formality.

At 8.30am on 19 December, troops of the Punjab Regiment occupied the Secretariat Building and unfurled the Indian flag, signifying the end of the 450-year Portuguese occupation of Goa. The Portuguese left shortly afterwards, leaving most of their buildings intact, despite direct orders from Dr Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, that they should destroy everything before departing.

POST-INDEPENDENCE

After the liberation, the commander of the expeditionary force, Major General Candeth, was appointed the military governor of Goa. Under the provisions of the Constitution 12th Amendment Act of 1962, the former Portuguese colonies of Goa, Daman and Diu were integrated with the Indian Union, effective from the first day of the liberation.

Towards the end of 1962, the new political system started to take root through a number of elections. In September an informal consultative council was formed and in October the first *panchayat* (local government council) elections were held. In December there were elections for the state assembly and Goa's two parliamentary seats, and the first proper state government was operating in Goa by the end of December 1962.

The major unanswered question was that of Goa's statehood. Neighbouring Maharashtra insisted that Goa be added to its own territory, and that Konkani, the language of the Goans, should not be recognised as an official language. The issue was finally settled on 16 January 1967 when, in an opinion poll, Goa, Daman and Diu opted to remain as a Union Territory, rather than be assimilated into their neighbouring states.

In May 1987 Goa split from Daman and Diu, and was officially recognised as the 25th state of the Indian Union. The struggle to retain Konkani had also been won; in 1992 it was recognised as one of the official languages of India.

GOA & WWII: SEA WOLVES

Although Portugal remained neutral throughout WWII, in 1943 Goa briefly became the location of one of the most important and little-known actions to take place in the Asian theatre. At the time the Germans were taking advantage of Goa's neutrality to use the small colony as a base for spying activities. Three German ships were sheltered in the harbour and a large amount of military intelligence was being collected by personnel on board. In particular, information on allied shipping was being passed from Mumbai to Goa and thence to German U-boats – nicknamed 'Sea Wolves' – which were then able to target the convoys accurately.

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) in British India needed to avoid violating neutral territory but at the same time had to take action. With an initial raid into Vasco da Gama they succeeded in abducting the German agent who they believed to be masterminding the operation, but the passage of information continued. The only solution, it was reasoned, was to sink the *Ehrenfels*, the ship on which the transmitter was hidden.

The way they went about it was less than conventional. Instead of using commandos, the SOE engaged the services of a territorial unit, the Calcutta Light Horse. After the volunteers were put through special training, they were loaded onto a tramp steamer for Goa. Nothing could have looked less threatening than the battered tub that entered Mormugao Harbour in the middle of the night. The soldiers attached mines to the German ships and then, having stealthily boarded the vessels, overcame the crews and destroyed the radio equipment as well, just for good measure.

All three German ships were destroyed in the raid and the passage of information about allied shipping effectively stopped. The raid was regarded as a great success, although it was several years before the details of what really happened were released. The story is recounted in James Leasor's book *Boarding Party* and the film, *Sea Wolves*, starring Gregory Peck and Roger Moore.

For most of the 1990s political instability, the bane of the country as a whole during this period, disrupted life in Goa. Goan politicians are notorious for 'floor-crossing' (switching parties). The political instability of the state is evident in the fact that during the 15 years between 1990 and 2005, Goa has had 14 governments.

The Congress Party held sway for much of the 1990s, but at the end of the decade the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power after Congress was riven with defections. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, the BJP ousted its rebellious Congress Party allies to ride to power in its own right in October 2000.

In mid-term elections in 2002 – hurriedly called because the government was reportedly close to collapse due to defections – the BJP failed to win an absolute majority, gaining 17 of the 40 seats. Cobbling together an alliance of the United Goans Democrat Party (UGDP), the Hindu Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) and an independent, Parrikar again won government.

However, the latest act of political randomness took place in March of 2005, when the governor (whose role is largely ceremonial) dissolved the assembly. The effect was to suspend legislature and declare President's rule. The dismissed Parrikar government declared that the 11.30pm ceremony swearing in the new Chief Minister was unconstitutional.

A by-election in June 2005 saw the Congress-led alliance come back to power after winning three of the five seats that went to polls. At the time of writing it held 18 seats on the legislative assembly, and the BJP 17.

When Portugal refused to relinquish control of Goa, the UN General Assembly ruled in favour of self-determination. When the Indian army moved in, the UN considered condemning the 'liberation' but was vetoed by the Soviet Union.

The website www.freegoa.com promotes the independence of Goa from India. For more information on the free Goa movement, follow the links on www.geocities.com/prakashjm45/goa/ for the Goan Center, established to promote the liberation of Goa from Indian Independence.

1955

Portuguese troops open fire on thousands of nonviolent protestors

1961

Indian troops cross the border into Goa and the Portuguese leave soon after

1987

Goa officially declared India's 25th state by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

2005

Governor dissolves assembly in March and President's rule is declared; Congress-led alliance comes back into power

The Culture

GOAN IDENTITY

Given that global interest in Goa is entrenched, Goans themselves have always had to assert and adapt their identity in relation to foreign influence. Resistance to Portuguese colonialism has morphed into historical pride at having Portuguese roots, while attempts to maintain the distinction between Goa and India reinforce a specifically 'Goan' identity that spurs on environmental, economic and social activism in a bid to keep Goa one of the most prosperous states in the country.

Today, the foreigners with whom Goa must engage are generalised into loose categories of backpackers, package or charter tourists and 'hippies'. The latter category is the most evocative. For some Goans, the term 'hippy' is synonymous with any unkempt and socially displaced foreigner who uses drugs, engages in wild orgies on the beach and seduces locals into similarly misguided ways. Some of those hippies, though, have thrown their chips in with this subcontinental state. Some of their children were born and educated here, and the future of Goa is of more consequence than the homeland from which they are displaced.

This is modern Goa, where a local hang-out means a hole-in-the-wall Indian restaurant where people speak Konkani and Hindi and drink chai. It also means a funky chill-out restaurant where the menu is German and patrons chillum out under banyan trees. It means a whitewash Catholic church alongside a Hindu temple, where Christian wakes are held in honour of Hindu deities.

The differences are evident but similarities pervade below the surface to unify different versions of Goa. Whether Catholic Goan, Hindu Goan or new Goan, all have an opinion about the changing face of Goa and nostalgic memories of 'the way it used to be', and all are eager to see that Goa doesn't lose its distinctiveness.

LIFESTYLE

Traditional Culture

The following information must be read in light of the fact that there are strong links and overlaps between the practices of the Christian and Hindu communities. Furthermore, the influences of the flood of visitors Goa receives every year means that many aspects of traditional Goan culture are disappearing or changing.

BIRTH

In Hindu communities it is considered the privilege of the young wife to go to her parents' house for confinement. After the birth the mother and child are rubbed with turmeric and oil, and the child is swathed in cloth bandages. The first ritual, albeit a declining one, comes on the sixth day after birth. Known as 'mother sixth' (*sathi*), a drum is beaten throughout the night and the family keeps a vigil to protect the child from evil spirits.

For 10 days after the birth the mother is considered impure and is not touched by anyone except the midwife. On the 11th day, mother and child are bathed, and the house is purified. On the 12th or 13th day the *barse* (naming) takes place. In Christian communities, the child is named at its baptism.

SUSEGAD

A term that crops up frequently in connection with Goans, *susegad* is an attitude along the lines of 'relax and enjoy life while you can'. It's a philosophy of not getting overwrought if work takes longer than planned, of making an appointment for 10am knowing full well that the other party won't turn up until at least 10.30am, and of taking time to sit and chat.

The original Portuguese word *sosegado* (literally meaning 'quiet') may have been used more by the Catholic community than the Hindus, but Goans are alike in their understanding of *susegad*. On the 25th anniversary of Goan Independence, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi described how 'an inherent nonacquisitiveness and contentment with what one has, described by that uniquely Goan word *sosegado*, has been an enduring strength of Goan character.'

It is *susegad* that makes a visit to Goa special; there are always people ready to smile and say hello, to let you onto a crowded bus or to sit and chat about whatever comes to mind.

MARRIAGE

Among both Christian and Hindu communities a similar process is undertaken to procure a suitable partner for a son or daughter. This generally begins with discreet inquiries among the community. Failing this, advertisements may be placed in local newspapers, emphasising the professional qualifications of the individual and the calmness of their character.

Dowries are still required to be paid by the bride's family in both Christian and Hindu weddings. This can either help facilitate a match or hinder it; a mixed-caste marriage will become much more acceptable if there's a good dowry, but a high-caste girl whose family has no money can find it very difficult to secure a partner from a similar background.

The wedding ceremony itself is a lengthy and noisy affair. Towards the end of the proceedings the bride and groom join hands in a ritual known as *kanyadana*, while water and silver coins are poured over their clasped hands. The final marriage ritual, *saptapadi*, takes place when the couple walks seven times around the sacred fire, thus making the marriage irrevocable.

Christian weddings are similar to those in the West, although some rituals are borrowed from Hindu traditions, such as the ritual bathing of the bride before the wedding. *Chuddo* (green bracelets traditionally worn by married women) are also worn by Christian brides. Tradition dictates that should her husband die before her, the widow should break the bangles on his coffin.

DEATH

Funeral ceremonies in the Hindu community are similar for all castes. Children below the age of eight are buried, while all others are cremated. In preparation, the body is washed, laid on a bier and covered with a shroud. The chief mourner (usually the eldest son) also bathes. The body is carried by family members or friends to the funeral pyre, the son lights it, then walks three times around it with a pot of water, finally standing at the head of the pyre.

On the third day after the cremation, the son, accompanied by a few friends and family, collects the ashes, which are then consigned to water – possibly the sea or a stream. Those who can afford it will travel north to scatter the ashes on the sacred Ganges River.

On the 10th day after the cremation, all members of the house take a purificatory bath, and on the 11th day, *panchagavya* (a liquid consisting

A good source of information for travellers to Goa is www.goacentral.com, with information sections about its history and culture.

If you're missing Goans when you leave Goa, tap into the global community of Goans living abroad. Young London Goans Society (www.ylgs.org.uk) and the UK and Canadian chapters of Goan Voice (www.goanvoice.org.uk; www.goanvoice.ca) are good places to start.

Teresa Albuquerque's *Anjuna: Profile of a Village in Goa* is a fascinating, in-depth look at the history of one Goan village through the years. Dr Albuquerque has both the academic background and the family connections in the community to be able to sketch an unrivalled portrait of the life of the village. History, architecture, folklore and traditions are all covered.

GAUDA GET OUT OF HERE

A traditional wedding among the minority Gauda people is unusual for the theatricality of the customs leading up to the ceremony. The day before the wedding, the groom is given a haircut and bathed. Then, he attempts to run away from his family and friends, refusing to marry the chosen bride. He is brought back to the house and the next day the ceremony takes place.

of cow's milk, cow's urine and other substances) is sprinkled over the house in a ritual purification.

In the Christian community, deaths are followed by burial. Personal items are placed with the deceased in the grave, including (depending on the habits of the deceased) cigarettes and a bottle of alcohol!

There are numerous superstitions in the Hindu and Christian communities about restless spirits – particularly of those who committed suicide or died before being given last rites. A number of measures are made at the funeral to discourage the spirit from returning. The clothing and funeral shroud are cut, and a needle and thread are placed in the coffin. The spirit of the deceased who wishes to come back must first repair its torn clothing, a task that takes until daylight, at which time departure from the grave is impossible.

Contemporary Issues WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Generally, the position of women in Goa is better than that elsewhere in India. Not only do women in Goa have property rights that are not shared by women in other Indian states (thanks in part to the Uniform Civil Code), but Goan society has also been much more enlightened about the education of women.

A result of Goa's progressive policies has been that women are well represented in professions and positions of influence. While men undoubtedly still dominate, women fill large numbers of places as doctors, teachers and university lecturers, and 30% of *panchayat* (local government council) seats are reserved for women.

There are, however, aspects that still point to inbuilt prejudice – a trend that the discrepancy between male and female literacy in the state confirms (according to the 2001 consensus, 89% for men, 76% for women).

FEMALE FETICIDE

Among Hindus it is still considered preferable to have a boy rather than a girl. This is less important in Catholic families, but nonetheless the birth of a girl is greeted with less fanfare than that of a boy.

In a bid to counter the practice of aborting females, the determination of sex of the unborn child, with a view to terminating the pregnancy should it be female, has been made illegal by the Prohibition of Sex Selection Act. It is also illegal for medical practitioners to use prenatal diagnostics to determine the sex of foetuses. Nor can gynaecologists inform patients of the sex of their unborn child. Despite the law, the number of girls born continues to fall significantly short of the number of boys, because doctors who abide by the law lose business to those that don't.

Although in Goa girls do not suffer ill-treatment to the same extent that their sisters in other parts of India do, there are efforts to promote equality of the sexes here too. Posters declare 'Girl or boy small family is joy' and those geared towards the Catholic community remind people of God's equal love of males and females.

Konkani does not have a script of its own; it is written mostly in the Roman script. The Portuguese language is now mostly confined to the rich, aristocratic families and the elder generation, particularly in Panaji's Latin Quarter.

Robert S Newman's *Of Umbrellas, Goddesses & Dreams* is a series of essays on Goan culture and the changes of the past two decades by an American writer and regular visitor to Goa.

ECONOMY

Prior to Independence in 1961, Goa's economy was largely based on fishing, agriculture and the export of primary products such as timber and rubber. Because there was only a relatively small market for goods, industrialisation was minimal, and consisted only of small-scale fish- and fruit-canning plants and a few small factories. In 1961 the annual per capita income, assessed at current prices, was estimated at Rs 434. Today, the per capita income is Rs 34,000 – among the highest in India.

POPULATION

Goa's population has grown hugely since Independence. In 1961 the population was 590,000, at the last national census (2001) it had burgeoned to around 1.34 million. The spiralling figures reflect, more than anything else, the huge influx of Indians from elsewhere in the country.

The state's enormous migrant population predominantly consists of poor workers who arrive during the dry season in search of employment, mostly as labourers. There is another influx of visitors from as far afield as Nepal and Kashmir who come to sell goods to tourists. Whole families of women and children from Karnataka, Kerala and even Rajasthan travel to Goa to peddle handicrafts and fruit on the beaches. There are also the overlooked white expatriates (colloquially dubbed 'hippies'), some of whom would consider Goa to be their home.

RELIGION

Goa is often misunderstood as having a Catholic majority, perhaps because Christianity has had so predominant an influence on its history, culture and architecture. In fact, around 65% of Goans are Hindu and only 30% Christian. The remaining 5% is mostly Muslim.

BAKSHEESH

Though demands for baksheesh are not nearly as constant in Goa as in the rest of India, many find this a frustration. In keeping your cool, remember that it wasn't invented simply to extract money from tourists, but actually has some equitable and charitable underpinnings. Observe how Indians (even those who are obviously not excessively wealthy) often give something, and it's expected and accepted by both sides.

Whether or not you should give money to beggars has been a debate for as long as people have been travelling. The black-and-white school of 'No' justifies its policy with arguments that it is not always possible to know whether the money you give will be used for the betterment of the life of the person you hand it to, and that often it supports an evil industry whose victims are the beggars themselves. More moderate members of this camp argue that money is better given to charitable organisations. In contrast are those who simply look at individual situations for their individual merit and acknowledge that sometimes a beggar is simply a person in genuine need of help, which you have the capacity and opportunity to provide. Ultimately the choice is a personal one, but in making it there are various things to consider.

El Shaddai (www.childrescue.net) strongly discourages giving money to children who beg in Goa, given that they may have been harmed to illicit your sympathies and may be giving their money to an 'employer'. Instead, El Shaddai encourages you to buy them food or fruit, and direct them to an El Shaddai feeding programme. See p138 for more information about El Shaddai.

International Animal Rescue (www.iar.org.uk) is adamant that you not give money to people using snakes, monkeys or other animals for illegal begging. It is particularly firm on the cruelty involved in snake charming, and the environmental impact of removing them from the wild.

In making your decisions, be mindful of the fact that you do have the capacity to help people in Goa, and make responsible decisions accordingly.

A May 2003 survey by *India Today* magazine put Goa ahead of all other Indian states on parameters such as health, infrastructure and investment, while it came second in prosperity and consumer markets (only behind Delhi). Overall, Goa was ranked the best state of the country to live in.

Goa's three English-daily newspapers are available online: *Herald* (www.oheraldo.in), *Navhind Times* (www.navhindtimes.com) and *Gomantak Times* (www.gomantaktimes.com).

However, statistical data does not reveal the religious diversity that typifies the state. During the imposition of Christianity by the Portuguese, some family members moved to Hindu-held areas, while others converted to the new faith and remained in Portuguese territory. Thus from the start, families contained members of different faiths.

The distinction was further blurred by the way the new religion was adapted to suit the local population. As early as 1616, the Bible was translated into Konkani. In 1623 Pope Gregory gave permission for Brahmin families converting to Catholicism to retain their caste, and a number of local festivals and traditions continued to be observed.

Even today, this fusion of these religions is evident. The countless whitewashed churches around the state demonstrate the splendid adaptation of Christianity; garlands often adorn Christ and the Virgin Mary, and Mass is often said in Konkani. Furthermore, Christians and Hindus often observe the same festivals, or at least pay respects to those of the other faith. In Mapusa, the Church of Our Lady of Miracles was built on the site of an old Hindu temple and the annual feast day sees crowds of Hindus and Christians paying tribute together. In Siolim, an annual wake is held in honour of the local deity. Every Christian and Hindu household in the community sends offerings to the shrine before a procession starts and prayers containing attributes of both faiths are offered in Konkani for the unity of the whole village.

At the time of research, a spate of robberies of relics from churches was shaking the complacency of religious tolerance that exists in the state, and ultimately reinvigorating the fervour with which the majority respect different faiths.

The geographical relationship with religion remains: Hindus are spread across the interior inland talukas (districts; Pernem, Bicholim, Satari, Ponda, Sanguem, Quepema and Canacona) and the far north of the state, while Christians tend to reside in the coastal regions, particularly in the central talukas (Tiswadi, Mormugao, Bardez and Salcete).

The largest Muslim community is in Ponda, where the state's oldest mosque is located.

Hinduism

The essential Hindu belief is in Brahman, an infinite being from which everything derives and everything will return. One of the most common tenets deriving from this is karma. Hindus believe that life is cyclical and subject to reincarnations, eventually leading to moksha, a spiritual release. Karma is the law that determines an individual's progression towards that point; good karma (through positive actions) may result in being reborn into a higher caste and better circumstance, whereas bad karma (accumulated through bad deeds) may result in reincarnation in animal form. It is only as a human that one can acquire sufficient self-knowledge to achieve liberation from the cycle of reincarnation.

GODS & GODDESSES

The many gods and goddesses are merely manifestations of Brahman, who has three main representations (the Trimurti): Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Brahman

Formless and eternal, Brahman is the source of all existence. Brahman is *nirguna* (without attributes), whereas other gods are manifestations of Brahman and therefore *saguna* (with attributes).

The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions* is an excellent reference.

Brahma

Brahma, who is often depicted with four heads, plays an active role during the creation of the universe, but at other times is occupied meditating. Brahma is sometimes shown sitting on a lotus rising from Vishnu's navel; a symbol of the interdependence of the gods.

Vishnu

Vishnu, from whose feet the Ganges is said to flow, is often depicted with four arms holding a lotus, a conch shell, a discus and a mace. Vishnu is the preserver or sustainer of all that is good, and often associated with 'right action'. Vishnu has 22 incarnations, including Rama, Krishna and Buddha.

Shiva

Shiva is the destroyer, but without whom creation couldn't occur. The creative role played by Shiva is symbolised by his representation as the phallic lingam. Shiva has 1008 names and takes many forms, often depicted with four or five faces, draped with snakes, holding a trident while riding Nandi, his bull. Nandi symbolises power and potency, justice and moral order. Parvati, Shiva's consort can take many forms.

Ganesh

Elephant-headed Ganesh is the god of good fortune and the patron of scribes. There are many legends as to how Ganesh came to have an elephant's head. One is that he was born to Parvati in his father's (Shiva) absence. He was mistakenly beheaded by Shiva who, on discovering that he had decapitated his own son, vowed to replace Ganesh's head with that of the first creature he came across.

Krishna

An important incarnation of Vishnu, Krishna was sent to earth to combat evil. His seduction of milkmaids has inspired many paintings and songs.

Hanuman

The hero of Ramayana and the champion of acrobats, Hanuman is the monkey god who is capable of taking other forms.

The Shiva Movement

The Shaivite (followers of the Shiva movement) worship Shakti as mother and creator. The concept of Shakti is embodied in the ancient goddess Devi (mother and fierce destroyer), also known as Durga.

SACRED TEXTS

There are two categories of Hindu sacred text: those believed to be the word of god (*shruti*, meaning 'heard'), and those produced by people (*smriti*, meaning 'remembered').

The Vedas are regarded as *shruti*, and considered the basis for Hinduism; the oldest was compiled over 3000 years ago. The Vedas explain the universe and reflect on life and death.

The *smriti* texts are a collection of literature spanning centuries. They include expositions on domestic ceremonies, government, economics and religious law. Its best-known elements are Ramayana (the Ramayana centres on the conflict between gods and demons and is thought to be the work of one person, the poet Vilmike), the Mahabharata (focusing

A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology & Religion, by John Dowson, is an Indian paperback reprint of an old English hardback. As the name suggests, it is in dictionary form and is one of the best sources for unravelling who's who in Hinduism.

Shiva is sometimes depicted as the lord of yoga: an ascetic with matted hair, an ash-smeared body and a third eye symbolising wisdom.

For easy-to-understand depictions of the Hindu holy texts, read Amar Chitra Katha's colourful comic-book-style versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Other titles in this children's series include Ganesh, Krishna and Hanuman.

on the exploits of Krishna) and Puranas, which promote the notion of Trimurti. The Vedas have popular appeal because, unlike the Puranas, they aren't limited to males of the higher castes.

SACRED ANIMALS & PLANTS

Hindus have long worshipped animals, particularly snakes and cows. The cow represents fertility and nurturing, while snakes are associated with fertility and welfare.

The Banyan tree symbolises the Trimurti and is symbolic of love; Shiva is believed to have married Parvati under one.

WORSHIP

Hindu homes often have a dedicated worship area. Beyond this, temples are the centre of religious life.

Puja is a focal point of worship and ranges from silent prayer to elaborate ceremonies. Devotees leave the temple with a handful of *prasad* (temple-blessed food). Other forms of worship include *aarti* (auspicious lighting of lamps) and bhajans (devotional songs).

ARTS

Goa's arts scene is dynamic and perpetually evolving. Goans celebrate at any opportunity and embellish their festivities with song and dance. The rich artistic and cultural heritage of Goa thrives today, and is entirely accessible to the foreign visitor who wants to find it.

Glance at the posters on notice boards and tree trunks and you will discover just how pervasive a love of arts is in this state; look for opportunities to learn the tabla, or for your kids to learn how to paint.

Music

The musical scene in Goa is as eclectic as they come. While you're here, be sure to get out and see some; even if you don't like the style, this is the perfect place to appreciate other peoples' appreciation of it.

THE CASTE SYSTEM IN GOA

Although the origins of the Hindu caste system are hazy, it seems to have been developed by the Brahmins (priest class) in order to maintain their superiority over indigenous Dravidians. Eventually, the caste system became formalised into four distinct classes, each with its own rules of conduct and behaviour.

These four castes are said to have come from Brahma's mouth (Brahmins; priest caste), arms (Kshatriyas; warrior caste), thighs (Vaisiyas; caste of tradespeople and farmers), and feet (Sudras; caste of farmers and peasants). Beneath the four main castes is a fifth group, the Untouchables (Dalits; officially, Scheduled Castes), who literally have no caste and perform the most menial and degrading jobs. Hindus cannot change their caste – they're born into it and are stuck with it for the rest of their life.

The caste system does not play as large a part in Goa as elsewhere in India, but it is still recognised and treated in a uniquely Goan way. Interestingly, the Christian community follows the caste system too. This can be traced back to the Portuguese. As an incentive to convert to Catholicism, high caste Goan families were able to keep their caste privileges. Furthermore, when the religious orders were recruiting lay clergy from the local population, only Brahmins were considered suitable, as it was felt that only they would be able to command the respect of the rest of the people.

Today caste is considered important mainly when it comes to marriage; candidates are selected from appropriate castes.

Healthy Living with Ayurveda, by Anuradha Singh, provides an understanding of one's constitution (*prakriti*) and tailoring a diet and exercise regime accordingly.

Live musical events are regular occurrences attended by foreigners and locals alike. Performing musicians are sometimes foreigners who have come to Goa to fuse their music with Indian traditional elements. For example, Prem Joshua is a German performer whose take on Indian traditional sounds has been lapped up by the locals.

CLASSICAL FOLK MUSIC

There's a strong tradition of classical music in Goa, from the labouring songs of Goa's poorest indigenous people, the Kunbis, to the formalised songs of the Christian community for singing at weddings and festivals.

The *mando* (p38) takes pride of place in the Catholic tradition, but there are plenty of other *zoitis*, songs common to both the Hindu and Christian communities sung at various stages of the marriage ceremonies. In fact there are folk songs for almost all occasions: children's lullabies (*piannos*); songs for singing in the fields; songs for fishing; and even songs traditionally sung by the saltpan workers and toddy tappers.

The *fado* is a European-influenced form of Goan folk, and a dying art form. The *fado* (also known as *saudades* in Portuguese) still occasionally features on folk albums and is championed by artists like Oslando and Lucio Miranda.

For a real insight into traditional Goan music it might be worth getting any of the albums by Gavana, a cultural group formed to preserve and promote Goan music and dance.

KONKANI POP

To the untrained Western ear, one piece of Konkani pop is indistinguishable from the next. Konkani pop is an excitable onslaught of electric guitars and keyboards, with Konkani crooners and whining female singers.

GOA TRANCE

In the 1990s, Goan DJs developed their own brand of techno, now known as Goa trance (or psy-trance), and this is what you'll hear played at the infamous raves.

Difficult to describe but easily recognisable once you've heard it, Goa trance is a hypnotic mix of a heavy electronic beat (up to 170 beats per minute), with lighter levels said to be derived from classical Indian music. Though it has a heavy techno element, artists stress the spiritual side of the music, calling the style an 'interface between technology and spirituality'.

Goa trance is performed by DJs and artists around the world, especially in Europe, Scandinavia, Israel and Japan, but probably the most famous artist is still Goa Gil, the dreadlocked and bearded maestro who started the full-moon parties in the early 1970s and developed the concept of Goa trance, along with fellow pioneer DJs Laurent, Fred Disko and Mark Allen. Gil came to India from San Francisco in 1969, studying yoga in the Himalaya before settling in Goa. He has released 13 albums and tours the world performing at raves, although his appearances in Goa are rare these days. The mainstreaming of Goa trance was helped along by the likes of Danny Rampling and Paul Oakenford. Today Goa trance labels largely originate in Europe or Japan, but there are still home-grown labels.

Accomplished Goa trance artists include Hallucinogen (*Twisted, The Lone Deranger*), Juno Reactor (*Transmissions, Beyond the Infinite, Bible of Dreams*), Man With No Name (*Moment of Truth, Earth Moving the Sun*) and Astral Projection (*Trust in Trance, Dancing Galaxy, Another World, Amen, Ten*).

The Kala Academy has identified 27 forms of folk art in Goa.

Check out www.goatrance.de to find out where Goa trance parties are happening around the world.

The site of acclaimed Goa trance DJ Goa Gil, www.goagil.com, includes tour dates.

LIVE MUSIC VENUES

The best place to catch a performance of Indian classical music and dance is at the Kerkar Art Complex in Calangute every Tuesday evening, or at the Kala Academy in Panaji. The Pop, Beat & Jazz Music Festival, held at the Kala Academy in February, provides opportunities to see performances of all types of music.

A good place to see local live acts is at the Saturday night markets in Baga and Arpora. Ingo's Saturday Nite Bazaar features everything from rock fusion bands to jazz and Goan folk music. For information on where to find Goa trance, see Party's a Goa?, p148.

Dance

Musical and dance arrangements generally have their origins in devotional practices. These days, however, both Hindus and Christians have appropriated and modified these traditions in such a way that music and dance now plays a significant role in the day-to-day life of Goans.

The most famous Goan song and dance form is the *mando*. Dubbed the 'love song of the people of Goa', the *mando* blends rhythms of Indian music with traces of Portuguese melody, and is accompanied by a *ghumot* (drum). The dance is highly stylised and the words of the songs are just as important as the movements. The theme of the *mando* is love, and its inherent deception, frustration, and union. The *mando* is often performed in honour of bridal couples. At weddings the *mando* is often followed by other traditional dances: the faster and more lively satirical *dulpod*, and sometimes the *dekhni*, which is performed by women, and known in Konkani as 'bewitching beauty'. It revolves around the story of a girl coaxing a boatman to take her across a river so she can sing at a wedding. In true Goan cross-cultural style, this traditionally Hindu song, is more often performed by Christian girls wearing Hindu dress.

Foogdi is another popular dance performed by women. There are numerous versions, but the most popular is in a circular formation, which begins slowly and gains speed towards the climax. The dance concerns domestic issues and contains fables to guide on family and societal issues.

Dances can be seen at tourist events and resorts, but the more authentic versions must be tracked down in villages on the eve of important events and during festivals.

REMO FERNANDES

Known in the West and worshipped in India, Remo Fernandes is famous for his ability to fuse cultural influences in both his music and his image.

Remo was born in Siolim in 1953. After studying architecture in Bombay and hitchhiking around Europe and Africa (busking along the way), Remo returned to Goa. Several rejections from Indian labels made him record his first (and arguably one of his best) albums, *Goan Crazy*, at home in Siolim. From there, Remo shot to success with more hit albums, movie score offers, awards, product endorsements and titles like 'the Freddy Mercury of India'.

Remo is fondly loved in Goa, not only for the versatility of his talent but also for never cutting his Goan roots along his path to fame. When Remo turned 50 in May 2003, he celebrated with a 4½-hour free concert in Goa.

Look out for *Old Goan Gold* and *Forwards into the Past*, which has arrangements by Fernandes and vocals by Lucio Miranda. At the time of writing, a new album, *Muchacha Latina*, was due for imminent release. Remo still records in his studio at home.

While performing the *mando*, women sometimes wear Burmese-style skirts. These are presumed to have been introduced by upper-class Goans returning from the Portuguese colonies of Macau and Timor.

Literature

Although it can sometimes be difficult to get hold of English-language Goan literature (books go out of print very quickly), Konkani literature is thriving and there is also some interesting writing by Goans in English.

Angela's Goan Identity, a fictional work by Carmo D'Souza, gives a fascinating insight into the struggle of Goan 'Anjali' (called 'Angela' by Portuguese priests) to define her Goan identity towards the final years of the Portuguese era in Goa.

Ferry Crossings, edited by Manohar Shetty, showcases Goan writing talent and highlights the diversity of cultural influences that have shaped the state. The short stories, translated into English from the four main languages used in Goa, deal with everyday subjects of Goan life.

Sorrowing Lies My Land, by Lambert Mascarenhas, first published in 1955, has since been reprinted. The subject is the struggle for Goan Independence launched in Margao in 1946. The book is held to be a classic of Goan literature. The subjects and settings of the short stories in his *In the Womb of Saudade* are drawn from Goan life.

Victor Rangel Ribeiro slowly weaves together Goan vignettes in his first and award-winning novel *Tivolem*. Mario Cabral E Sa's *Legends of Goa*, illustrated by one of Goa's best-known artists, Mario de Miranda, is a reworking of some of the best folktales of Goa. It lends extra colour to the state's traditions and history, and is an interesting read.

Dust: and Other Short Stories from Goa is a collection of short stories by Goan writer and conservationist Heta Pandit. The character-driven stories bring to life aspects of everyday life in Goa.

Architecture

The evolution of Goan architectural styles has run a parallel course with the evolution of Goa. The state's history of engagement with Europe has left an indelible imprint on almost every facet of cultural life. Architecture is no exception; it too has been appropriated and 'Goanised' over the years to such an extent that exploring churches, temples and palatial houses is one of the highlights of a visit to Goa.

TEMPLES

Goa's temples are interesting because they combine aspects of Muslim and Christian architecture into basically Hindu layouts. Domed roofs are a Muslim trait, while whitewashed octagonal towers and balustraded façades have been borrowed from Portuguese church architecture.

Of particular note are the *deepastambhas* (lamp towers) that are almost exclusive to Goan temples and are decorated with oil lamps at festival times. Early *deepastambhas*, such as the one at Saptakoteshwara Temple in Naroa, are distinctively eastern in shape and ornament, whereas later examples, such as the one at the Shantadurga Temple near Ponda, with its whitewashed pillars and baroque decoration, seem to have been lifted straight from the Catholic architecture of Old Goa.

Despite these unique aspects, Goa's temples share many common features with Hindu shrines throughout India, and the layout is pretty much standard to all. The pillared pavilion is known as the *mandapa*. Between the *mandapa* and the inner sanctum, where the deity resides, is the area known as the *antaralya*, and the sanctum itself is called the *garbhagriha*. On either side of the *antaralya* there are usually smaller shrines to the deities worshipped at the temple.

Outside the main building, the temple's courtyard is generally surrounded by *agarshalas* (accommodation blocks) for visiting pilgrims.

On a Goan Beach, by Remigio Botelho, tells the story of a young Goan returning to his homeland after many years in Kenya. It is a fascinating insight and fictional analysis of the complexities of Goan culture.

Well-known Goan poets include RV Pandit, Philip Furtado and Eunice D'Souza.

A Hindu house can be identified with the sacred *tulsi* plant growing in its forecourt in a *vriindavan* (ornamental container). According to Hindu mythology, the *tulsi* is actually one of Vishnu's lovers, who Lashmet (Vishnu's consort) turned into a shrub in a fit of jealousy.

Larger temples tend to have a storage area somewhere in these buildings where the *ratha* (ceremonial chariot) is stored. These carts are used to transport representations of deities around the village on feast days.

CHURCHES

Goa's churches owe the majority of their design features to the European traditions of their time, and some are openly copies of buildings in Rome or Lisbon (St Cajetan's in Old Goa is a replica of St Peter's in Rome). There are, however, some features that distinguish them from their European counterparts. In some cases these are practical modifications to suit the local climate. Large windows are set deep into the walls, for example, to allow plenty of light to penetrate, but to keep out direct sunlight.

The churches were constructed from the local rock laterite, which is porous, so there was a need to whitewash it regularly. The lime compound with which this was done was made from oyster shells. This had the effect of proofing the walls against moisture, although heavy monsoonal rain meant that the work had to be repeated every three or four years. Since laterite is coarse and unsuited to fine carving, the more important churches, such as the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa, have façades of basalt that had to be specially imported.

Other features that make the churches unique are the work of the local Indian artisans who built them. The floral decoration inside the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Old Goa is quintessentially Indian, as is some of the flamboyant woodcarving to be found in churches throughout Goa.

All churches in Goa share several common features, the most striking being the reredos (ornamented backdrop to the altar). Since most of Goa's large churches were built in the 16th and 17th centuries, the reredos' designs conform to the styles of the age – massive and ornate. In front of the reredos is the main altar and then the chancel, which is sometimes decorated with carvings or paintings. Many of Goa's churches are constructed in a cruciform design with side altars in the transepts.

HOUSES

There are still a few excellent examples of palatial houses throughout the Goan countryside. In the grandest houses, the layout allows for a huge frontage, often with floor to ceiling glass patio doors and tiny wrought-iron balconies in front of each window.

In the smaller houses the emphasis is on a wide veranda that almost encircles the house and provides plenty of shade. In almost all cases the central feature of the façade is the *balcao* (shady porch) that stands in front of the main entrance.

Within houses, the layout is generally dominated by a *saquão* (central courtyard) where the family carries out their affairs away from public scrutiny. Larger houses have a chapel or a family altar where daily prayers are said.

See p167 for information on two houses that are open to the public.

Painting

Although there is no style that is particularly distinctive to Goa, there is a long tradition of painting, evidence of which can be seen in the murals in the Rachol Seminary near the village of Raia. Today, Goa's budding artists are nurtured at the College of Art in Panaji, after which most opt to travel out of the state to study art at a higher level elsewhere.

In Goa, Odette Gonsalves is famous for her paintings of horses, and Dr Subodh Kerkar, who runs the Kerkar Gallery in Calangute and has

The Goa Heritage Action Group (www.goaheritage.org) is an NGO that aims to preserve and promote the natural and created heritage of Goa.

Before the availability of glass, windows were covered with translucent oyster shells. The 7cm to 10cm diameter discs were set in wooden frames and allowed a gentle, cool light to filter into the rooms.

Houses of Goa, by Heta Pandit and Anabel Mascaren, is an attractive in-depth coffee-table book that is available throughout Goa.

DOS & DON'TS

Goans are hospitable and friendly people, and visitors should not take advantage of the welcome they receive. Sadly, a number of tourists (domestic as well as foreign) see Goa's relatively liberal attitudes as an excuse to pay scant attention to the feelings of the local community.

Dress Sense

While most Goans are as modest as the rest of India in terms of dress, far too many travellers abuse Goan hospitality (and economic dependency) by wearing clothing that is entirely inappropriate and gives the rest of us a bad name. Nudism (which for Indians includes going topless) is illegal in Goa, although many foreigners continue to do it. Signs on some beaches warn of this and police occasionally patrol beaches (mainly to discourage illegal vendors), but there is generally a reluctance to enforce the law.

Though many Goans living along the beach have become resigned to it, many are offended by displays of nudity and some blame incidents of assault and harassment of foreign women on such behaviour. They won't say anything because, like everyone else, they are aware that their livelihoods depend on keeping tourists happy.

Much more worrying for tourists and locals is Goa's reputation throughout India as a place where women tourists are 'on show'. This has spawned a new and unwanted form of tourism, as Indian men from other states use Goa for a weekend's boozing and ogling. Free from family and community constraints, they can spend two or three days drinking (alcohol is much cheaper in Goa than elsewhere in India) and staring at sunbathers. If you wish to avoid this kind of unwanted attention and protect the next innocent traveller from negative assumptions, cover up while at the beach.

It goes without saying that it's appropriate to cover up in churches and temples, and in social situations.

It is also customary to take off your shoes before entering a Hindu temple, and a polite thing to do at a person's house. There is no hard and fast rule, but if there's a pile of shoes by the front door, or if your host or hostess removes their shoes upon entering the house, do likewise.

Religious Etiquette

It's important to behave respectfully when visiting religious sites, particularly when attending a service. Don't talk loudly or smoke, and dress conservatively (no shorts or singlet tops). Never touch a carving or statue of a deity. Religious etiquette advises against touching anyone on the head, or directing the soles of your feet at a person, religious shrine or image of a deity.

occasional exhibitions elsewhere, depicts typically Goan scenes in a variety of styles and disciplines. The work of artist and illustrator Mario Miranda adorns everything from books to billboards to the walls of Café Mondegar in Mumbai, and cartoonist Alexys Fernandes is well known for his contributions to many newspapers and magazines in Goa and elsewhere.

For those interested in the art scene, there are several galleries that can be visited. Between Calangute and Candolim, the Kerkar Gallery mostly shows work by Dr Kerkar himself, although there's also a small section of Goan handicrafts. In Panaji the Gitanjali Gallery at the Panjim Pousada has changing exhibitions of Goan and Indian artists.

Cinema

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world with around 800 movies produced annually. It would seem though that quantity does not have a proportional relationship to quality. Bollywood movies have to be seen to be believed. They are formulaic and melodramatic montages that celebrate romance, violence and music, with lip-synched duets and

Bollywood queen Aishwarya Rai is the first Indian woman to be immortalised in wax at Madame Tussaud's in London.

dance routines, and skin-bleached stars who are worshipped like deities. There is little regard for details like plot and script, but the mainstream laps them up.

The other type of Indian movie is the one that has a basis in reality. These smaller-budget films grapple with real issues. Deepa Mehta, Arparna Sen and Mira Nair are some film-makers who dabble in this medium and bring home the awards.

While you'll have to hunt down the more alternative options, it's worth seeing a Bollywood movie while you're here.

The recently opened Inox Cinema in Panaji (p96) holds an annual film festival.

Theatre

Goa's active theatre scene is dominated by the unique local street plays known as *tiatr* and *kell tiatr*. The *tiatrs*, almost all of which are in Konkani, provide a platform for satire on politics, current affairs and day-to-day domestic issues. Each *tiatr* usually comprises seven acts of fifteen or so minutes each, with song and dance in between. The first ever *tiatr* was called 'Italian boy' and created by Lucasinho Ribeiro, a Goan living in Mumbai, who brought the art form back to Goa with him in 1894. An annual *tiatr* festival is held at the Kala Academy in Panaji, which showcases the work of well-known *tiatr* writers.

SPORT

While everyone knows how passionate Indians are about cricket, it may come as a surprise to learn that Goa's top sport is football (soccer), another legacy of the Portuguese. Every village has at least one football team – sometimes a team for each ward of the village – and league games are fiercely contested. The result of this keen following at village level has been the creation of several teams that regularly perform at national level; there are even Goan players in the national football squad. The main Goan teams are Salgaonkar, Dempo, Sesa Goa and Churchill Brothers, and major matches are played at the Nehru Stadium, Fatorda, near the Margao bus station. The season runs from October to April and tickets to the matches generally cost less than Rs 20.

Goans are also keen cricketers and games take place everywhere at local levels. Goa's English-language daily papers publish reports on matches and upcoming fixtures.

In addition to numerous Bollywood movies filmed in Goa throughout the year, parts of *The Bourne Supremacy*, starring Matt Damon and Franka Potente, were filmed in Palolem.

While cricket is sometimes said to be a colonial imposition, football is believed to have been used by Goans in Mumbai to assert their distinctive identity within India during the 1960s and '70s.

Environment

THE LAND

Goa occupies a narrow strip of the western Indian coastline, approximately 105km long and 65km wide, with a total area of 3701 sq km. It shares state borders to the north and northeast with Maharashtra, and to the south and southeast with Karnataka.

The state is divided up into two administrative districts – north and south Goa – with the major towns in each being Panaji (formerly Panjim, the state capital) and Margao (formerly Madgaon) respectively. Beyond this simple subdivision the state is further divided into 11 talukas (districts): Pernem, Bicholim, Satari, Bardez, Tiswadi and Ponda in north Goa, and Mormugao, Salcete, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona in the south.

Topographically, Goa falls into three distinct areas: the Western Ghats, the midland region and the coastal region.

Western Ghats

In the east of the state lie the foothills and some of the peaks of the Western Ghats, the mountain range that runs along the west coast of India, separating the Deccan Plateau from the low-lying coastal areas. In Goa, the Western Ghats, made up locally of the Sahyadri Range, comprise about 600 sq km of the total area of the state. Some of the main peaks are Sonsagar (1166m), Catlanchimauli (1107m), Vaguerim (1067m) and Morlemchogor (1036m). The Ghats are the source of all seven of Goa's main rivers, the longest of which, the Mandovi, is 77km in length.

Midland Region

Goa's hinterland lies between the Ghats and the coast; it's a huge area mostly made up of laterite plateaus of between 30m and 100m in elevation. The laterite rock that comprises much of Goa is nearest to the surface on many of these plateaus. Since the plateaus are rich in both iron and manganese ores, they have become the scenes of large-scale open-cast mining.

Spice, fruit and areca nut plantations have become established in this region, particularly in the lower areas where soil is richer. Making efficient use of the water sources available, the terraced orchards support coconut palms and fruits such as jackfruit, pineapples and mangoes.

Coastal Region

Though only a fraction of the total area of the state, the coastal region is its claim to fame.

Mangroves line many of Goa's tidal rivers and provide a unique habitat for birds and marine animals.

The inland areas, known to Goans as the *khazans*, are lands reclaimed by the building of bunds (embankments); the sluices and floodgates allows controlled use of land. While most of the land is irrigated using fresh water, many of the canals are allowed to fill at least partially with salt water, so that they can be used for fish farming. Other areas are flooded with salt water, which is then left to evaporate for the collection of salt.

WILDLIFE

Despite Goa's small size, the state's unique topographical and environmental variation allows for an impressive array of fauna, though some species now occur in only very small numbers. The forested areas of the

Goa's main rivers are the Mandovi, Zuari, Terekhol, Chapora, Sal and Talpona.

Goa – A View from the Heavens, by Gopal Bodhe, is a beautifully photographed book dedicated to Goa's environment and heritage.

National Geographic has described Goa's Western Ghats as one of the richest ecosystems on the planet.

The Netravali 'bubble' lake in Sanguem taluka has continuous bubbles rising up to the surface. If you clap loudly, the bubbles increase in intensity. It's a mysterious phenomenon.

Rare sightings of the black panther have been reported from the jungles of Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary.

The bamboo poles sticking out of the banks of rivers are actually holding fishing nets below the water line. The fish are trapped during low tide when the water recedes through the nets.

Western Ghats have traditionally provided a habitat for some extremely rare animals. In reality, unless you're prepared to spend days camped out in a wildlife sanctuary, the most interesting animals you are likely to see are those kept in captivity and some of the more common species that live in the wild. Bird enthusiasts have more success; Goa is particularly notable for its spectacular birdlife (see *Chick It Out*, p46).

Animals

MAMMALS

Although Goa Tourism's brochures would have you believe otherwise, wild elephants are rarely found in the state's forests nowadays. Most members of the cat family are extremely rare too, and sightings of tigers and leopards (known in India as panthers) are few and far between.

More common in this family is the jungle cat, which is about 60cm long excluding the tail. Notable for its long limbs and short tail, it is able to kill animals larger than itself. Also common are small Indian civets and common palm civets. Among the dog family, jackals, striped hyenas and wild dogs are occasionally sighted.

Goa has two common types of monkey that are frequently seen – bonnet macaques and common langurs. Much less commonly seen are slender lorises, only occasionally found in the dense forests of Molem and Canacona. There are also very occasional sightings of sloth bears, which can grow up to 1.5m long and generally feed on bees and termites.

Other more frequently seen inhabitants are common mongooses, which are found near settlements, and common otters and smooth Indian otters, both of which are seen near water. The Western Ghats are also home to Indian giant squirrels, which are found in the forests of Molem, Valpoi and Canacona. Other relatives in Goa are three-striped palm squirrels, five-striped palm squirrels and flying squirrels.

Among the animals found at ground level are common Indian porcupines and the wild boar, both of which are notorious for damaging crops. Particularly common are the large gaurs (Indian bison). The animals you're most likely to see in Goa's wildlife sanctuaries are sambars and chitals, both species of deer. One of the rarer animals to inhabit Goa's forests is the nocturnal pangolin, otherwise known as the scaly anteater.

Common dolphins are found off the coastline and can often be seen on 'dolphin-spotting' boat tours.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

The common house gecko is often seen in buildings at night feeding off insects attracted to light. Snakes are common in Goa but the only place you're likely to see one is in a snake charmer's basket at a market.

Among the nonpoisonous variety are common blind snakes. Much higher in the Ghats, locally named torava snakes grow up to 50cm in length and are notable for their yellowish colouring and rough tails. Indian pythons are undoubtedly the largest of the snakes found in Goa: they have been known to grow up to 4.5m in length.

There are relatively few venomous snakes in Goa. The most distinctive are cobras, which are found near the coast and inland. There are three common varieties, as well as the much larger (and now rare) king cobras. The common varieties can grow to more than 1.5m in length, and the venom is likely to be lethal if not treated quickly. Common Indian kraits are more poisonous still.

Kusadas (sea snakes) are common along the coastline, often seen dead on the beach; since they are completely adapted for water, they cannot

move on land and die if stranded. *Kusadas* are extremely poisonous, but they are very timid and their fangs so far back that they rarely get enough grip to give a proper bite.

Goa has a small population of other reptiles including two species of crocodile. Although rare, it is still possible to see these along the banks of a few inland waterways, and several companies advertise 'crocodile-spotting' trips by motorboat along likely stretches.

Freshwater turtles are found throughout the state and Goa is also a traditional breeding ground for marine turtles, which struggle ashore between October and December to lay their eggs in the sand. Recent efforts have been stepped up to counter the threats posed to these remarkable animals by tourism and opportunistic locals (see *Turtle Beaches*, p151).

BIRDLIFE

Keen bird-watchers will be in seventh heaven in Goa, and even those who have previously had little interest in birds may find the rich variety at least a little bit enthralling.

A trip to the Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary on Chorao Island is recommended. Other sites of interest are the wetlands at Carambolim (12km east of Panaji), at Shiroda (40km southeast of Panaji) and even the marshland south of the Baga River.

One of the best ways to see birds in Goa is to join an ecotour with **Southern Birdwing** (☎ 2402957; www.southernbirdwing.com); or contact locally based ornithologist and guide **Gordon Frost** (☎ 2275301).

Plants

The Western Ghats have the greatest diversity of plant life, including areas of jungle (around Dudhsagar Falls and the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary). The vegetation here is, for the most part, tropical evergreen, although there are large areas of cane, bamboo and semi-evergreen trees.

On the lower slopes of the Ghats, thinner, dry soil supports lateritic semi-evergreen forest. In many places (eg Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary) the arid nature of the landscape leads to savanna-like vegetation. In the less dry patches of the lower slopes, timbers such as teak are grown.

In the midland region the lateritic rock is close to the surface and the soil is too thin in many places to support much more than coarse grass and scrub. Where possible, cashew trees, a significant cash crop that can withstand the hot dry conditions, have been laid out in plantations.

In the folds between the hills where shade and springs are found, the small valleys are often extremely fertile. Centuries-old methods are still followed in the cultivation of spices and fruits. Coconut palms are cultivated not only for the nuts and toddy (sap that is collected, fermented and distilled), but also to give shade to less hardy trees.

Beneath the canopy of coconut palms and mango trees, the tall, slender areca nut palms (which provide betel nuts for *paan*) are grown. These shelter an incredible variety of fruit trees and spice plants, ranging from pineapples to bananas, and pepper to cinnamon. Although many of these plants are indigenous to Goa, others were introduced by the Portuguese, including rubber trees, pineapples and chillies.

The coastal region has a similarly wide range of flora. The saline conditions support a substantial area of mangroves (estimated at a total area of 20 sq km).

Along the coast, coconut palms predominate. Another distinctive feature in the area is the large banyan trees that often provide shady meeting places.

In the village of Dhurbat, crocodiles on the canal are worshipped as the guardian spirits of the community.

Heinz Lainer's *The Goan Foundation* is a book for true bird enthusiasts. It is an overview of bird habitat, population, distribution, migration, breeding status and other information on the 420 bird species that have been recorded in Goa.

Ayurveda describes some 2000 species of plant, of which at least 550 are still in use.

CHICK IT OUT

Goa's climate and rich vegetation support an abundance of birds. Common varieties found in Goa include eagles and other birds of prey such as kites, buzzards, kestrels and ospreys. There are also many varieties of pigeons, doves, cuckoos, kingfishers and woodpeckers.

Out of Town

On the outskirts of town and in open spaces, a flash of colour between ruins may turn out to be a bee-eater. Indian rollers are related to bee-eaters, but are larger and bulkier; they are attractively patterned in mauve and blue.

Drongos are shiny black birds that have distinctively shaped tails and typically perch on a post or obliging cow. Pipits and wagtails strut among the stubble, sometimes in large flocks; wagtails can be recognised by their habit of pumping their tail up and down.

Common hoopoes, with their orange-brown bodies and black-and-white wings, tails and black-tipped crests, are seen in open country, around cultivated fields and villages.

Birds of prey such as harriers and buzzards soar over open spaces looking for unwary birds and small mammals on which they feed.

Kites and vultures can wheel on thermals for hours on end. Ospreys, another species of large hawk, feed almost exclusively on fish that they seize with their vicious, hooked talons; ospreys patrol large tanks (reservoirs) and other waterways.

Waterways

Stalking on long legs at the shallow edge of tanks and ponds are various species of egret, graceful white birds with long necks and daggerlike bills. Their elegant poise belies the deadly speed with which they spear frogs and fish. Cattle egrets stalk among livestock looking for large insects stirred up by their namesake.

Indian pond herons, also known as paddy birds, are small and well camouflaged in greys and browns. They are almost invisible until they take off, showing their pure white wings.

Colourful kingfishers, locally known as 'flying beers', wait patiently on overhanging branches before diving down for their prey. Several species are to be seen in the area, including black-and-white pied kingfishers, tiny but colourful common kingfishers (also known as river kingfishers) and the striking stork-billed kingfishers, which have massive red bills.

The water's edge is also home to smaller and drabber species, such as plovers, water hens and coots, which feed and nest among vegetation.

Forests

Patches of forest often support a richer variety of species, some of which pick grubs off the forest floor, while others forage among the branches and leaves.

Among those heard more often than seen are woodpeckers, whose drumming sound is made as they chisel grubs from under bark. Its colourful relatives include barbets, which habitually sit at the topmost branches of trees and call incessantly in the early morning; and Indian koels, whose loud, piercing cry in spring can be maddening.

Fruiting trees are a magnet for many bird species. Fruit eaters include a number of pigeons and doves, such as green pigeons and imperial pigeons; noisy flocks of colourful parrots; the minivets in splendid red-and-black or orange-and-black plumage; and various cuckoo-shrikes and mynahs, including hill mynahs, an all-black bird with a distinctive yellow 'wattle' about the face. Sadly, hill mynahs are sought-after as cage birds because they can be tamed and even learn to talk.

The jewels in the crown are the bizarre hornbills, which, with their massive down-curved bills, resemble the toucans of South America. At the other end of the spectrum in both size and colour, iridescent, nectar-feeding purple sunbirds could be called the jewels in the canopy.

A host of smaller birds, such as flycatchers, warblers, babblers and little tailorbirds (so-called because they make a neat little 'purse' of woven grass as a nest), forage for insects in all layers of vegetation from the ground up.

WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES & PROTECTED AREAS

In the late 1960s Goa established three wildlife sanctuaries: Bondla, Bhagwan Mahavir (which also contains Molem National Park) and Cotigao. There's also tiny Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary on Chorao Island. In 1999 two new wildlife reserves – Madei (208 sq km) in Satari taluka and Netravali (211 sq km) in Sanguem taluka – were declared protected areas, but these lack infrastructure for visitors. The creation of these protected areas links the sanctuaries running along the Western Ghats, providing a corridor for wildlife.

Advance accommodation bookings and requests for further information can be made via the **Forest Department** (www.goaforest.com) or by contacting the **Conservator of Forests, Wildlife and Eco-Tourism** (☎ 2229701; 4th fl, Junta House, Swami Vivekanand Rd, Panaji 403001).

Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary

At 240 sq km, Bhagwan Mahavir (p115) is the largest wildlife sanctuaries in Goa. There are a couple of watchtowers from where it's possible to observe wildlife and there's accommodation at Molem. As with the other parks, visitors need to be patient to see much. The countryside and the forest inside the park are wonderful and it's worth a visit for the scenery alone. Within the sanctuary is Goa's highest waterfall, Dudhsagar.

Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary

Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary (p114) is the state's smallest, with an area of only 8 sq km, but is also the most accessible from Panaji or Margao. It has a basic forest watchtower overlooking a small water hole. Regular sightings in the sanctuary include gaurs, barking deer and sambars. The park has a nature interpretation centre, a small zoo, and basic accommodation at the park entrance.

Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary

In the far south of the state, this 86-sq-km wildlife sanctuary (p197) offers regular sightings of sambars and gaurs from its tall tree-top watchtowers. There are also occasional sightings of large predators such as panthers, which have strayed into the park. There is a small nature interpretation centre and some accommodation, but it's an easy daytrip from Palolem.

Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary

Named for India's most renowned ornithologist, this sanctuary (p100) is only 1.8 sq km, but an impressive repository of fascinating species. The network of channels through the sanctuary are best explored on a small canoe. The bird sanctuary is easily accessible from Panaji; a ferry

More than just being attractive and offering much needed shade, the banyan tree is a symbol of love for Hindus: Shiva and Parvati are believed to have been married under one.

Tourism has now overtaken mining in terms of industry importance. The contribution of mining to the state's GDP has declined from 40% to 15%.

ECOFRIENDLY PIG OUT

You may never encounter one during your stay in Goa, but if you do there's something rather disconcerting about the traditional Goan toilet. Basically it's a normal squat-style toilet in which the pipe runs out of the building and straight into the pigsty behind the cubicle. The sound of contented snuffling is an unusual accompaniment to a normally solitary activity. However strange it may seem to Western eyes and ears, the pig loo is the perfect combination of environmental resources. The pig loo solves the problem of sewage disposal, wasted water and pig food all in one go and arguably does its bit to promote vegetarianism. By comparison, the sit-down flush loos now in use all over Goa are nothing but trouble.

from Ribindar (4km from of Panaji) takes you across the Mandovi onto Chorao Island where the sanctuary is located.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The greatest environmental threat facing Goa today comes as a result of the state's rush to develop economically, often to the detriment of its environmental development. While the tourist industry nibbles away at the coast, the mining industry is uprooting inland Goa, and there is simultaneous effort to counter the detrimental affects of industry.

Conservation

In addition to the wildlife sanctuaries that have been established, there are conservation activities underway. The **WWF** (www.wwfindia.org) has become increasingly active in Goa in recent years; visit its educational conservation exhibition at the Goa State Museum (p88).

The state government is still learning the language of conservation. The Wildlife Division of the Forest Department increasingly enforces the *Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972*; while there were only two instances of charges made in 1993–94, 24 charges were made in 2003–04.

The conservation of Goa's natural and man-made heritage is addressed by the **Goa Heritage Action Group** (www.goaheritage.org), which organises the annual Goa Heritage Festival and the Fontainhas Arts Festival.

Green Goa Works (www.greengoaworks.com) is a nonprofit company chaired by Goan fashion designer Wendell Rodrigues has been established. It promotes the use of effective microorganisms (EM) in hotels, households and markets to reduce environmentally hazardous waste. EM is a highly concentrated liquid solution containing various naturally occurring organisms. When diluted, the liquid can be used as a household cleaning agent, without damaging the environment.

In 1964 the **Archaeological Survey of India** (<http://asi.nic.in/main.html>) assumed responsibility for conservation of the state's monuments, including buildings of Old Goa. This means there is some funding for maintenance and restoration work.

The **Goa Foundation** (www.goacom.com/goafoundation) is the state's leading environmental group. It works to maintain and protect Goa's environment by campaigning (often successfully) against mass developments, and runs a series of educational programs to inform people as to how they can

CARE FOR STRAY DOGS

Previous government policy was to shoot stray dogs; it was not unusual to see contractors (paid on a per-dog basis) roaming the streets and beaches taking pot-shots at hapless pooches. Thankfully, petitioning to courts put a stop to this, and the living conditions of Goa's strays have improved remarkably in recent years through the work of NGOs like **International Animal Rescue** (IAR; in UK ☎ 01825-767688; www.iar.org.uk), a UK-based NGO that has set up a shelter in Goa to care for sick animals and implement a sterilisation programme. Since it began operating in Goa in 1998, it has treated thousands of animals. A team of vets sterilises dogs (15 per week in Palolem alone), vaccinates them, and fits them with a blue IAR collar before releasing them back onto the streets.

Volunteers are needed to perform the arduous task of playing with the animals at the centre. Also, some timid dogs need to be befriended prior to sterilisation. Visitors are welcome (as are donations) to the centre near Mapusa. Visit IAR's Goa office, **Animal Tracks** (☎ 0832-2268328, 2268272; Madungo Waddo, Assagao, Bardez). Contact it if you see a sick or injured animal. If its vehicles are otherwise engaged, you may need to put the animal in a taxi to the centre.

In the February 1999 issue of *National Geographic* magazine, Goa was likened to the Amazon and Congo basins for its rich tropical biodiversity.

The Book of Indian Birds has been revised many times since it was published in 1941, but still contains original text by Dr Salim Ali.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

- Support those who support the environment – choose accommodation that has implemented ecofriendly approaches to waste management.
- Dispose of items respectfully – minimise the waste you create by travelling with a water filter rather than buying bottled water, which will contribute to Goa's plastic waste problem.
- Use water sparingly – water shortages usually occur at the end of the tourist season.
- Goa is child-friendly, so make your children Goa-friendly – opt for reusable nappies over disposable ones.
- Just because water-sports facilities are available, doesn't mean they should always be used – consider their impact on the habitat of plants, animals and people.
- Many travellers in Goa don't know or don't care about their impact on Goa – perhaps a conversation about it can change this.

minimise their impact on the environment. For information about the work of the Goa Foundation and other NGOs, see p136.

Deforestation

Over-cutting of the forested Western Ghats started at the beginning of the 20th century, and by the time the Portuguese departed, considerable damage had been done. Shortly after Independence, licences were granted for further large-scale felling. In some cases the cleared land was replanted with imported crops such as eucalyptus and rubber plants. In many cases, however, the deforestation was permanent, with land being used for roads, open-cast mining and other development.

The construction of reservoirs in the hills near the Maharashtra border has been particularly damaging. Whole valleys are submerged under the new reservoirs, while neighbouring areas are deforested to rehouse the families made homeless.

Environmental groups estimate that more than 500 hectares of Goa's forests are disappearing every year, and that a mere 8% to 12% of the state is now under dense forest.

The damage caused by deforestation is far-reaching. The habitats of many of Goa's native animals are disappearing, as are the homelands of several of the minority peoples of the state. The Dhangars, Kunbis and Velips, whose way of life revolves around agriculture and animal husbandry, have been forced into smaller and smaller pockets of land.

The government seems to have stepped up its efforts to protect Goa's forests in recent years: felling fees now apply and licences must be issued. Also, it claims that since 1984, it has planted 4000 hectares of land under its Social Forestry scheme.

Mining

Nearly half of the iron ore exported annually from India comes from Goa. Goa's mines produce ore exclusively for export, and for eight months of the year huge barges ferry the ore along the Zuari and Mandovi Rivers to waiting ships.

Such large-scale extraction of ore has had a destructive effect on the Goan hinterland and the coastal region. Because no stipulation for environmental reconstruction was made when mining concessions were issued, many mines have simply been abandoned once extraction was complete.

Since it was first conceived, the Konkan railway outraged environmentalists, who are concerned about the interference of the railway with heritage sites in Goa, and its disturbance of irrigation channels.

Energy and Environment in India: A Handbook, by Bani P Banerjee, is a comprehensive and up-to-date academic account of the sustainability issues affecting India.

FADING FISHERIES

Goa's once-abundant waters are facing a very real threat from overfishing. Locals wistfully reminisce about their childhood days when *ramponkars* (fishermen) would give away 60cm-long kingfish because they had so many to spare. These days it's difficult to buy fish direct from boats, and even local markets offer slim pickings because much of the best fish is sold directly to upmarket hotels or shipped to interstate markets where the best prices are fetched. Much of the best shellfish (prawns, crabs and lobsters) is exported. Naturally this has driven up the price of seafood, not only for tourists, but for Goans who rely on their staple fish curry rice.

Overfishing has become a threat since modern motorised trawlers started to replace traditional fishing methods. Trawlers stay relatively close to the shore, adversely affecting the *ramponkars'* catch. The use of tighter nets, which do not allow juvenile fish to escape (these are either thrown away or used for fish fertiliser) has further dwindled fish stocks. Although the *ramponkars* have been agitating for some sort of restrictions on trawler fishing for a number of years, little has been done to avert what some ecologists believe will be a marine resource disaster.

Out of the 80 million tonnes of rock and soil extracted annually, only 13 million tonnes are saleable ore. Surplus is dumped on the spoil tips and a huge quantity of soil is washed away, smothering both river and marine life. Other side effects of mining have been the destruction of the local water table and the pollution of drinking water.

Tourism

Tourism has overtaken mining as Goa's most significant industry. In 2001, 1.38 million foreign and domestic tourists visited Goa – slightly more than the entire population of Goa. While many Goans welcome tourism as a valuable source of income, there is legitimate concern about the numbers involved, beyond mere pollution and overcrowding.

The changing face of tourism is bringing new environmental problems, and mass tourism is actively encouraged by the government. Hippies and backpackers are being replaced with higher-spending, short-term package tourists. Five-star hotels with lush grounds and golf courses and the proliferation of midrange hotels with swimming pools puts increasing strain on water resources. Many Goans question whether water from reservoirs built in deforested areas should be used to fill fountains and swimming pools, and maintain golf courses that will not even be used by the people of Goa.

Large-scale hoteliers have been known to violate environmental protection laws, acquiring water illegally and building within 200m of the high-water mark, resulting in the lowering of the water table. Local village wells frequently run dry weeks before the monsoon, and there is a danger that if saline intrusion occurs, ground water supplies could be ruined permanently.

While budget travellers pose social challenges to local Goans through nudity and drug use, there is little question that they have less environmental impact; bamboo and palm-thatch huts can be dismantled and put away at the end of a season.

The Transforming of Goa is a collection of essays, edited by Norman Dantas, dealing with topics such as Goan identity, politics, language and religion. Although the scope is wider than merely environmental matters, the environment features prominently.

Food & Drink

Goa has a unique cuisine that stems from the intermingling of the highly developed Goan culture and 450 years of Portuguese rule. The Portuguese were the first colonisers to arrive in India and the last to leave. Goa was kept in an isolated cocoon from the rest of the country, left to concoct an original cuisine that is as casual and vivacious as the Goans themselves. It's reflected in rich curries, roasts coated in masalas and marinated in palm vinegar, cakes made of semolina, jaggery and coconut, and bread that's leavened with *feni* (alcoholic drink; p54). Food and drink are integral to a lifestyle that revolves around dance, music and celebration – 'to enjoy' is the Goan instinct.

Check out *Savour the Flavour of India*, by Edna Fernandes, an authentic collection of Goan and Indian recipes.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Given that Goa has the ocean on one side and is crisscrossed by a maze of canals, streams and rivers, it is little wonder that fish is the Goan staple, with over a hundred varieties of freshwater and saltwater fish and seafood. Along with those from Kashmir and Bengal, Goan Brahmins eat fish without the slightest qualms about polluting their 'holy status'.

In Goa, fish aside, chicken and pork are also favoured meats, and spicy Goan sausages – pickled in vinegar and red chillies – are a meaty must-try. Goan Hindus eat a lot of vegetables but the Christian diet is dominated by nonvegetarian foods (particularly on Sundays) with the occasional salad tossed in.

Goans specialise in elaborate puddings, cakes and sweet snacks. Don't miss *bathique* (a cake made of semolina, coconut and eggs), *dodol* (a black cake made of jaggery, rice flour and coconut cream) and famous *bebinca* (the layered 40-egg sweet that is rich with ghee and coconut milk).

Spices

Christopher Columbus was searching for the black pepper off Kerala's Malabar Coast when he stumbled upon America. South India still grows the finest quality of the world's favourite spice, and it is integral to most savoury dishes. Turmeric is the essence of most Indian curries, but coriander seeds are the most widely used spice and lend flavour and body to just about every savoury dish, while most Indian 'wet' dishes – commonly known as curries in the West – begin with the crackle of cumin seeds in hot oil. Tamarind is a popular souring agent in the south.

Goan cooking involves liberal amounts of spices, the most commonly used being cumin, coriander, chillies, garlic and turmeric. Another local ingredient used to flavour fish curries is *kokum* (a dried fruit that is used as a spice). Particular combinations of spices have led to a number of styles of cooking, which have subtly differing flavours – masala, vindaloo and the seafood dish *balchão* being some of the most famous.

Because of the prices it can fetch, saffron is frequently adulterated, usually with safflower – dubbed (no doubt by disgruntled tourists) as 'bastard saffron'.

NUTS ABOUT COCONUTS

The basic components of Goan cooking are, not surprisingly, local products. The claim that every part of the coconut is used for something is not an idle one. Coconut oil, milk and grated coconut flesh flavour many dishes, while toddy (the sap from the coconut palm), is also used to make vinegar and to act as a yeast substitute. Another important product of the palm is jaggery, a dark-coloured sweetener that is widely used in preparing Goan sweetmeats.

Rice

Rice is the most important staple in India; in South India, it turns up in every course. Long-grain white rice varieties are the most common, served piping hot with just about any 'wet' cooked dish. Rice is cooked up in a *pulao* (pilaf; aromatic rice casserole), as biryani in Muslim cuisine, or as masala rice in the South.

Dhal

While their staples divide north and south, the whole of India is united in its love for dhal (lentils or pulses), from the thin *sambar* (vegetable and dhal stew) of the south to the thick *moong dhal* of the north. You may encounter up to 60 different pulses: the most common are *chana*, a slightly sweeter version of the yellow split pea; tiny yellow or green ovals called *moong dhal* (mung beans); salmon-coloured *masoor* (red lentils); the ochre-coloured southern favourite, *tuvar dhal* (yellow lentils; also known as *arhar*); *rajma* (kidney beans); *kabuli chana* (chickpeas); *urad* (black gram or lentils); and *lobhia* (black-eyed peas).

Meat

While India probably has more vegetarians than the rest of the world combined, it still has an extensive repertoire of carnivorous fare. Goat (known as mutton), lamb and chicken are the mainstays; religious taboos make beef forbidden to Hindus, and pork to Muslims.

Sorpotel is one of Goa's most famous meat dishes, and is prepared from pork and pork liver, heart and kidneys. These are diced and cooked in a thick and very spicy sauce flavoured with *feni* to give it an added kick.

Xacuti is a traditional way of preparing meat, usually chicken, by cooking it in coconut milk, and adding grated coconut and a variety of spices. The result is a mild curry, but with a distinctive and delicious flavour.

Chouricos are spicy pork sausages that owe more than a passing debt to Portuguese culinary traditions. Goan sausages are prepared using well-salted and well-spiced cubes of pork. Once they have been made, the strings of sausages are dried in the sun and then hung above the fire where they are gradually smoked. Traditionally they are eaten during the monsoon, when fish is scarce. In preparation, they are soaked in water and then usually fried and served with a hot sauce and rice.

Cafrial is a method of preparation in which the meat (usually chicken) is marinated in a sauce of chillies, garlic and ginger and then dry-fried. The result is a rather dry but spicy dish.

Seafood

The Portuguese influence in Goan cooking extends to the sea. Seafood dishes such as *recheiado* (stuffed fish) and *caldeirada* (stewed fish) reflect the state's colonial heritage. But the true Goan staple dish is fish curry rice (fish in a spicy sauce served over rice).

With the variety and range on offer, combined with the skills of the local cooks, there is a mouthwatering choice outside of this. Kingfish is probably the most common item on the menu, but there are many others including pomfret, shark, tuna and mackerel. Among the excellent shellfish available are crabs, tiger prawns and lobster. Other seafood includes squid and mussels.

For the sake of tourist tastebuds, many places present seafood lightly spiced, or without spices at all. In this case the food is generally fried, grilled or cooked in a garlic sauce. Traditional Goan cooking methods, however, usually involve seasoning the seafood in some way.

On average, Indians eat almost 2kg of rice a week.

Rice is used to symbolise purity and fertility in Hindu wedding ceremonies and is often used as *puja* (offering) in temples.

Technically speaking, there is no such thing as an Indian 'curry' – the word, an anglicised derivative of the Tamil word *kari* (black pepper), was used by the British as a term for any dish including spices.

Among the most famous Goan dishes is *ambot tik*, a slightly sour curry dish that can be prepared with either fish or meat, but more usually fish. *Caldeirada* is a mildly flavoured offering in which fish or prawns are cooked into a kind of stew with vegetables, and often flavoured with wine. *Recheiado* is a delicious preparation in which a whole fish, usually a mackerel or pomfret, is slit down the centre and stuffed with a spicy red sauce, after which it is fried in hot oil. *Balchão* is a method of cooking either fish or prawns in a tangy tomato sauce. Because of the preservative qualities of the sauce, *balchão* can be cooked in advance and reheated up to four days after preparation. *Rissois* are snacks or starters that are made with prawns fried in pastry shells.

Pickles, Chutneys & Relishes

No Indian meal is complete without one, and often all, of the above. A relish can be anything from a roughly chopped onion to a delicately crafted fusion of fruit, nuts and spices. The best known is raita (mildly spiced yogurt, often containing shredded or diced cucumber, carrot, tomato or pineapple; served chilled), which makes a delicious and refreshing counter to spicy meals. *Chatnis* can come in any number of varieties (such as sweet and salty) and can be made from many different vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices. But proceed with caution before polishing off that pickled speck on your thali; it'll quite possibly be the hottest thing you've ever tasted.

Dairy

Milk and milk products make an enormous contribution to Indian cuisine: *dahi* (curd) is served with most meals and is handy for countering heat; *paneer* is a godsend for the vegetarian majority; popular lassi (yogurt drink) is just one in a host of nourishing sweet and savoury drinks; ghee (clarified butter) is the traditional and pure cooking medium (although it's not used nearly as much in India as in Indian restaurants abroad); and the best sweets are made with milk.

Sweets

The most famous of Goa's sweetmeats is *bebinca*, a wonderful concoction made from layer upon layer of coconut pancakes. Cooking the perfect *bebinca* is an art form, for not only does the cook have to get exactly the right mixture of egg yolk, flour, coconut milk and sugar, but the cooking has to be timed just right to ensure that all layers are cooked equally.

Dodol is another famous Goan sweet, traditionally eaten at Christmas, and made with rice flour, coconut milk, jaggery and cashew nuts. It is usually cooled in a flat pan and served in slices, and is very sweet. *Doce*, made with chickpeas and coconut, is another favourite.

DRINKS

Nonalcoholic Drinks

Chai is the drink of the masses. It is made with more milk than water and more sugar than you want to know. A glass of steaming, sweet, milky and frothy chai is the perfect antidote to the heat; the disembodied voice droning 'chai, chai *garam*' (hot tea) will become one of the most familiar and welcome sounds of your trip.

While chai is the choice of the nation, coffee is available everywhere in Goa, although true coffee lovers are likely to be disappointed. The most widely produced brew is 'milk coffee', which is simply Nescafé made with boiled milk. Tourist hotels and restaurants have adapted to Western

The Essential Goa Cookbook, by Maria Teresa Menezes, is an excellent, in-depth book focusing on this culinary hot spot.

India has more than 500 varieties of mangoes, and supplies 60% of the world with what is regarded as the king of fruit.

Each year more than 13 tonnes of pure silver are converted into the edible foil that's added to sweets for decoration.

The highest quality Darjeeling tea is graded as SFTGFOP, which stands for Special Fine Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe.

tastes, though, and most give you a pot of black coffee and a jug of milk. A number of restaurants and upmarket snack bars in Goa also offer freshly ground coffee – including cappuccino and espresso.

Sweet and savoury lassi is popular all over India, although the best are made in the north. *Falooda* is a rose-flavoured Muslim speciality made with milk, cream, nuts and strands of vermicelli. Hot or cold *badam* (milk flavoured with saffron and almonds) is an invigorating breakfast drink.

On the streets there are multitudes of fresh-fruit vendors; if the juice is ridiculously cheap, then it's probably been adulterated and you might just get a combination of water, ice and essence. Restaurants think nothing of adding salt and sugar to juice to intensify the flavours; ask the waiter to leave them out if you don't want them.

Alcoholic Drinks

More than three quarters of India's drinking population quaffs 'country liquor' such as the notorious arak (liquor distilled from coconut palm sap, potatoes or rice) of the South. This is the poor-man's drink and millions of people are addicted to the stuff. It is cheap, gives an instant high and tastes ghastly. Each year, hundreds are blinded or even killed by the methyl alcohol in illegal arak.

Because beer is hit by government taxes when it's served in restaurants and bars in parts of India, a bottle can cost a few times more than your entire meal; not so in Goa – the cheap beer is indeed one of the drawcards for domestic tourists. Most of the many local and national brands are straightforward Pilsners around the 5% alcohol mark; travellers' champion Kingfisher is available nationwide. Royal Challenge, Dansberg, Golden Eagle, London Pilsner and Sandpiper are good national brands.

FENI

It's as clear as water, it tastes like aromatic gasoline and it really packs a punch – Goa's most famous spirit is the double-distilled and fearfully potent *feni*. There are two types of *feni*, both of which are made from local ingredients.

Coconut or palm *feni* is made from the sap drawn from the severed shoots on a coconut tree. In Goa this is known as toddy, and the men who collect it are toddy tappers. Toddy can be collected year-round, so palm *feni* is in plentiful supply at all times.

Caju (cashew) *feni* can only be made during the cashew season in late March and early April. The cashew apple, when ripe, turns a yellow-orange colour and the nut ripens below it. When the fruit is harvested, the nuts are dried in the sun and the apples are trampled to collect the juice. Both palm toddy and *caju* juice can be drunk fresh immediately – but the juice only begins to ferment after it's left in the sun for a few hours.

After the fermentation process, the juice is placed in a large terracotta pot over a wood fire; the vapour exits through a tube that typically passes through an oil drum filled with water, below which the distillate is collected. The result is *uraq*, a medium-strength spirit (10% to 15% proof), some of which is kept and sold. The majority though, is distilled again to make *feni*. By the time it comes out of the second distillation, Goa's national drink has an alcoholic strength of around 30% to 35% proof.

Feni first-timers might be well advised to mix it with a soft drink like Limca or cola – or just close your eyes and shoot it. Goans are keen to offer advice to foreigners: don't drink it on an empty stomach; don't mix it with other spirits; and certainly don't swim after a couple of *fenis*. They're right; you don't realise how strong it is until you stand up.

A shot of *feni* in any bar or restaurant costs from Rs 20 to 40. You can also buy colourful decorative bottles from wine stores (between Rs 100 and 400), which make a good gift for friends you want to incapacitate.

Goa has several top-notch brews; look out for King in particular. These days a number of midrange to top-end restaurants offer imported beers such as Fosters, Heineken and Budweiser.

CELEBRATIONS

Goans need only the flimsiest excuse to celebrate and almost every month has a festival that requires feasting. Weddings are occasions to indulge gastronomic fantasies. Receptions begin with toasts, the cutting of an elaborate cake and ballroom dancing. The meal features roast suckling pig and other pork dishes such as *sorpotel* (pork and pig liver curry, to which pig's blood was traditionally added) and pork vindaloo (a pickled pork curry), so fiery that it has been nicknamed 'find a loo' by tourists taken by surprise. Seafood will also be prominent with dishes such as fish aspic (set in gelatine), oyster pie, stuffed and grilled *surmai* (mackerel) and curried or fried prawns. Desserts might include *hebinca*, crème caramel and *leitria* (an elaborate sweet made with coconut covered by a lacy filigree of egg yolks and sugar syrup).

Although Hindu festivals have the sheen of religious reverence, they are also occasions for feasting and each festival has its own special dishes. Sweets are considered the most luxurious of foods and almost every occasion is celebrated with a staggering range. *Karanjis*, crescent-shaped flour parcels stuffed with sweet *khoya* (milk solids) and nuts, are synonymous with Holi, the most boisterous Hindu festival, and it wouldn't be the same without *malpuas* (wheat pancakes dipped in syrup), *barfis* and *pedas* (multicoloured pieces of *khoya* and sugar). Pongal (Tamil for 'overflowing') is the major harvest festival of the south and is most closely associated with the dish of the same name, made with the season's first rice along with jaggery, nuts, raisins and spices. Diwali, the festival of lights, is the most widely celebrated national festival, and some regions have specific Diwali sweets; if you're in Mumbai, stuff your face with delicious *anarsa* (rice-flour cookies).

While the majority of the state marks its religious fervour by stuffing themselves, the most significant month for the other 5% is Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, when Muslims abstain from eating, smoking or drinking even water between sunrise and sunset. Each day's fast is often broken with dates – the most auspicious food in Islam – followed by fruit and fruit juices. On the final day of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, an extravagant feast celebrates the end of the fast with nonvegetarian biryanis and a huge proliferation of special sweets.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

There is a multitude of restaurants ('hotels'), their signage identifying them as either 'veg', 'pure veg' or 'nonveg'. Most midrange restaurants serve one of two basic genres: South Indian (which means the vegetarian food of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) and North Indian (which comprises Punjabi–Mughlai food).

Not to be confused with burger joints and pizzerias, restaurants advertising 'fast food' are some of India's best. They serve the whole gamut of tiffin items and often have separate sweet counters. Some deluxe hotels have outstanding five-star restaurants, usually with pan-Indian menus so you can explore regional cuisines. Although outrageously expensive by Indian standards they're within splurging reach of most travellers.

Look out for bakeries, sweet shops and juice stores in the larger towns. Markets in larger towns can also be a treasure-trove of eatable delights; within the winding warrens are hole-in-the-wall eateries with authentic

A portal to websites about Indian wine, www.indianwine.com, has notes on manufacturers, information on growing regions and more.

Copra (dried coconut flesh) is pressed and made into coconut oil, a very popular cooking medium in Goa and the rest of South India.

For a comprehensive travellers' guide to India's cuisine, see Lonely Planet's *World Food India*.

The word *balti* (of the ubiquitous-in-England *balti* house) was created as a marketing ploy by clever restaurateurs – *balti* is the northwestern name for the common Indian wok, better known as a *kadhai*.

fare for authentic (cheap!) prices. *Dhabas* (snack bars; literally ‘wayside eateries’) originally were the domain of North India, but you’ll find versions of them throughout Goa. The rough-and-ready but extremely tasty food served in these hospitable shacks has become a genre of its own known as ‘*dhaba* food’, though some moderately classy restaurants have appropriated the tag as a catchy title, and are far from shacks.

Goa has the best drinking in India. Several good locally brewed beers complement the free-flowing *feni*. Booze isn’t subject to the exorbitant levels of other states and there are cosy bars. Some restaurants double as watering holes when the kitchen shuts down and can offer a more pleasant environment to sit and drink than the sometimes dingy bars.

Quick Eats

Whatever the time of day, people are boiling, frying, roasting, peeling, juicing, simmering or baking food and drink to lure passers-by. Small operations usually have one special that they serve all day, while other vendors have different dishes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The fare varies; it can be as simple as puffed rice or roasted peanuts, as unusual as a fried-egg sandwich, or as complex as the riot of different flavours known as *chaat* (any snack foods seasoned with *chaat* masala).

Deep-fried fare is the staple of the streets, and you’ll find samosas (deep-fried pyramid-shaped pastries filled with spiced vegetables and less often meat), *aloo tikka* (mashed potato patty) and *bhajia* (vegetable fritter) in varying degrees of spiciness, along with *poori* (also spelt ‘*puri*’; thin puffed balls of fried dough, often stuffed with a variety of yogurt-based fillings) and *kachori* (golden balls of thick dough served hot with a range of stuffings and condiments). Mouthwatering dosas (thin pancakes of rice and lentil batter, fried and folded, and often served with masala-spiced potato filling) are served up by discerning vendors throughout India, along with the other southern specialities of *idli* (round steamed rice cakes often eaten with *sambar* and chutney) and *vada* (also spelt ‘*wada*’; potato and/or lentil savoury doughnut, deep-fried and served with *sambar* and chutney). Muslim-inspired kebabs have also found their way to Goa. Savvy street-side operators are beginning to fuse the Indian street-snack tradition with every cuisine imaginable; in Panaji you can stand on the side of the road and have a full Chinese meal.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

India produces some of the best vegetarian food on the planet. There’s little understanding of veganism (the term ‘pure vegetarian’ means without eggs), and animal products such as milk, butter, ghee and curd are included in most Indian dishes. If you are vegan, your first problem will be getting the cook to understand your requirements; street food might be your best option because at least there you can see how it is cooked.

Goan cuisine, however, does not naturally cater for the vegetarian, and as a compromise cooking styles such as *xacuti* and *caldinha* (dishes cooked in spices and coconut milk) are sometimes used in the preparation of vegetables. Two vegetable dishes, however, are *mergolho*, which is made from pumpkin and papaya, and breadfruit curry.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

Three main meals a day is the norm with as many tiffin as can be consumed without sabotaging the appetite. Breakfast is light, maybe *idlis* and *sambar*. A typical Goan lunch starts with a mildly spicy side dish such as *cafreal* (pieces of fried chicken coated in a green masala paste)

or *caldeen* (fish simmered in coconut milk, ginger and cumin), both of which are normally served with soft, square-shaped little loaves called *pao*. The second and main course might be *caril de peixe* or *ambot-tik* (both fiery hot fish curries) along with the compulsory crisply fried fish eaten with rice. The alternative is often to have a thali; it’s a great way to explore different flavours.

Few can wait until dinner before eating again so a substantial tiffin is often enjoyed at around 5pm. Dinner might not be until 10pm or 11pm. The Portuguese influence shows up more prominently in the evening meal. It might start with *sopa de camarao* (prawn soup, complete with heads and shells), followed by a side dish like chicken galantine or stuffed squid, to complement a main course like *assado de bife* (roast beef). Dessert could comprise coconut-filled crepes or a fool (mashed fruit and cream) made with mangoes.

Food & Religion

Food in India is integral to spiritual advancement. Regardless of creed, Indians share the belief that food is just as important for fine-tuning the spirit as it is for sustaining the body.

Broadly speaking, Hindus avoid foods that are thought to inhibit physical and spiritual development, although there are few hard-and-fast rules. The taboo on eating beef is the most rigid restriction. Devout Hindus avoid alcohol and foods such as garlic and onions, which are thought to heat the blood and arouse passions. These items are universally banned from ashrams and temples and during most religious feasts. Some foods, such as dairy products, are considered innately pure and are eaten to cleanse the body, mind and spirit. Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, health and longevity, also heavily influences food customs (see p129).

Food Etiquette

You should use your right hand for all social interactions, whether passing money, food or any other item. Eat with your right hand only; the left is considered unclean given its use in the bathroom. If you are invited to dine with a family, always take off your shoes and wash your hands before taking your meal. The hearth is the sacred centre of the home, so never approach it unless you have been invited to do so.

COOKING COURSES

For the moment, there isn’t the prolific presence of cooking classes that you’d expect be advertised amid notices promoting music or massage or yoga or reiki. But keep your eyes open; more and more guesthouses and restaurants are starting to realise that there is a market for assisting

Monisha Bharadwaj’s *The Indian Kitchen* is an excellent introduction to Indian staples and how to identify and store them, as well as 200 simple recipes.

For recipes online, go to www.indiaexpress.com/cooking; www.india Curry.com; and www.thokalath.com/cuisine.

Madhur Jaffrey is the West’s foremost expert on Indian cookery; her books *Indian Cooking* and *A Taste of India* are bibles of subcontinental cuisine.

PAAN

Meals are polished off with *paan*, a sweet, spicy and fragrant mixture of betel nut (also called areca nut), lime paste, spices and condiments wrapped in an edible *paan* leaf and eaten as a digestive and mouth freshener, and peddled by the *paan*-wallahs you’ll see everywhere. The betel nut is mildly narcotic and some aficionados eat them the same way heavy smokers consume cigarettes – over the years these people’s teeth become rotted red and black.

There are two basic types: *mitha* (sweet) and *saadha* (with tobacco). A parcel of *mitha paan* is an excellent way to finish a satisfying meal. Pop the whole parcel in your mouth and chew slowly, letting the juices secrete around your gob. You’re not doing it wrong; it really is supposed to be like this.

Legend says that Buddha, after falling asleep during meditation, decided to cut his eyelids off in an act of penance. The lids grew into the tea plant, which, when brewed, banished sleep.

budding chefs. Some top-end hotels offer cooking classes, and there many operators based in Western countries operate package cooking courses. The **Oriental Thai Restaurant** (☎ 3092809) in Candolim offers Thai cooking courses on Wednesdays between 2pm and 5pm for a minimum of four people.

UK-based company **India on the Menu** (www.indiaonthemenu.com) runs week-long cooking courses in various locations around Goa; prices vary according to which accommodation option you choose.

EAT YOUR WORDS

If you want to be able to say it before you eat it, turn to the Language chapter (p248) for help with pronunciation.

Useful Phrases

Do you accept credit cards?

What would you recommend?

Please show me the menu.

I'm (a) vegetarian.

I'd like the ..., please.

Please bring a/the ...

bill

fork

glass

glass of wine

knife

mineral water

plate

spoon

I don't eat ...

Could you prepare a meal

without ...?

beef

fish

meat stock

pork

poultry

red meat (goat)

I'm allergic to ...

nuts

seafood

shellfish

Food Glossary

ambot tik

balchão

bebinca

bhojanayalas

cabidela

cafrial

caldeirada

sour curry dish made with meat or fish and flavoured with tamarind

fish or prawns cooked in a rich, spicy tomato sauce; *balchão de peixe* is made with fish, *balchão de porco* is made with pork

richly layered, pancake-like Goan dessert made from egg yolk and coconut

basic restaurant or snack bar serving vegetarian food

a rich pork dish

method of preparation in which meat, usually chicken, is marinated in a sauce of chillies, garlic and ginger and then dry-fried

a mild curry of fish or prawns layered in a vegetable stew

caldinha

chai

chourico

dhaba

doce

dodol

dosa

dudh

feni

fish curry rice

fofos

jell

kofi

kokum

masko

mergolho

phala

sakor

sanna

sheet

sorpotel

tatee

tiffin

udok

uned

uttapam

vindaloo

xacuti

meat or vegetable dish cooked in spices and coconut milk

tea

spicy pork sausages, dried and smoked then cooked in hot sauce

basic restaurant or snack bar

sweet made with chickpeas and coconut

traditional Christmas sweet made with rice flour, coconut milk, jaggery and cashew nuts

paper-thin lentil-flour pancake

milk

Goa's most famous drink, a liquor distilled from coconut toddy or juice of cashew apples

Goa's staple dish, a simple concoction of fish or prawns in mild to hot curry and served with rice

fish rolls, spiced and fried in bread crumbs

ice

coffee

dried fruit used as a spice

butter

vegetable dish made with coconut, cashews and raisins

fruit

sugar

steamed rolls or cakes made with rice flour, ground coconut and toddy

rice

pork liver, heart or kidney cooked in thick, slightly sour, spicy sauce and flavoured with *feni*

egg

lights meals or snacks eaten through the day; also stainless steel containers often with three or four tiers in which people carry their lunch

water

small, round, crusty rolls

similar to a *dosa*

very hot curry, usually using pork, spiced with chillies, vinegar and garlic

method of cooking where a very hot sauce of spices and coconut milk is used to marinate meat (usually chicken) until quite dry

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