



## THE ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

A QUICK TWO-DAY OUTING IN SOME UNEXPLORED AREAS OF GOA THROWS UP MANY SURPRISES.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Having been to Goa umpteen times, I wanted my next trip to the attractive destination to be different from the usual beaches and bars routine. I wanted to check out the unexplored side of the state and I knew just how I would do it. I would be taking off on a Honda Navi as part of an

event. Launched just last year, this cross between a scooter and motorcycle has already won many hearts all over. The two-day event involved navigating Goa on the Navi. According to Nikhil V Desai, Managing Director, Gujarat Tourism Development Corporation, “The first ever Goa Hunt in association with Honda Navi that has found much acceptance in Goa is a good way to explore the lesser known side of Goa.” Something that Yadvinder Singh Guleria, Sr. VP (Sales & Marketing) echoed. “It has been a year since the Navi was launched and it represents the vibrancy of youth. Likewise Goa is also a fun destination loved by the youth so this association makes perfect sense.”

Day 1 of the event flagged off with a visit to the Mae de Deus Church at Saligao, a pristine white structure that dates back to 1867. The structure resembles a castle and is straight out of a fairy tale. It is built in Gothic style and has the statue of Mae de Deus or the Mother of God. Photography is only allowed from outside the gate and the best part is that the white facade magically transforms at night when the church is lit in different colours.

Our next stop was at the bustling Mapusa Market that has all things local. I suggest you certainly check out the fresh cashew fruits (from which the local drink

feni is made) as well as the cotton fruit or *churna*, a peanut-sized mildly sweet berry that is available from the forests near Assagoa for some time during April and May only.

After some retail therapy here, we headed to the Nyex Beach Club, the northern-most part of Anjuna Beach where you can see a beautiful stretch of the ocean that comes straight out of a postcard with beautiful palm trees, pastel blue water and dark brown sand. The best part are the rocky ledges and huge stone boulders that cut the force of the water. You can also see a large number of huge crabs here.

Day 2 started in the heart of Panjim in the stunningly beautiful Latin quarters Fontainhas — a secret tucked right in the heart of Goa. The narrow, windy lanes here transport you to another world as most buildings are several hundred years old. The best part is that each of the houses are coloured in bright hues of yellow, red, maroon, blue, green, teal and even white. The best way to explore this place is on foot and you will come across some quaint cafes and art galleries that give you great insight into the food and art scene of Goa respectively.

However, it is the Portuguese architecture of the homes here that take centre stage as you walk around and notice nuances like shell windows, *tulsi* plants in Hindu homes and the cross in the Christian homes. There is an old well coloured in bright pink, little roosters atop homes and name boards in blue patterned tiles that are hard to miss. After this I head for some more old-world charm to the churches of Old Goa. The Basilica of Bom Jesus which houses the mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier is well known but I suggest you hop over to the opposite complex that houses the Se Cathedral de Santa Catarina, among the largest in the country, and take in its Corinthian interiors. ■