

burning stoves; at Punakha, the rammed earth dwellings typical of the area have eight suites overlooking an orange orchard (800-477-9180; doubles, \$1,200).

Other options run the gamut. **Uma Paro** occupies a traditional flat-roofed white-walled structure; inside, all 20 spotless guest rooms have picture windows (8-271597; doubles, \$280–\$450). At **Taj Tashi**, stay on Thimphu's main thoroughfare and still enjoy pine forest views from all 66 guest rooms (2-336-699; doubles, \$275–\$675). In Punakha, the best of the standard lodgings is the **Hotel Zangtho Pelri**. Beyond the dragon-mural lobby are 45 basic rooms with twin beds and satellite TV (2-584-125; doubles, \$49).

Shopping

Thimphu has a surprising number of good-quality antiques, crafts, and souvenirs. The **General Post Office**, on Norzin Lam, is the only place to buy a smiling monk key ring or a T-shirt emblazoned with GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS, the index a former king created to measure non-monetary success (see "Pursuit of Happiness," page 216). A pin picturing Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the photogenic 28-year-old current king, is available at **Yak Handicraft**, on Clock Tower Square. In the Hotel Jumolhari, **Zambala** sells vintage yak-wool dresses worn by Laya women near the Tibetan border. The dresses hang above a mandala altar carved with dragons, elephants, and the Buddha.

Reading, Etc.

Quite a number of guidebooks are now available, but Françoise Pommaret's **Odyssey Guide Bhutan** is the definitive resource (Odyssey Illustrated Guides, \$23). In Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck's **Treasures of the Thunder Dragon: A Portrait of Bhutan**, the Bhutanese queen offers a unique perspective on her country's history, from villages to palaces (Penguin Global, \$20). For *Condé Nast Traveler's* earlier coverage of Bhutan, including a November 2004 feature by James Truman, see cntraveler.com.

Rent **Little Buddha**, filmed in Bhutan with locals as extras, and **The Cup** (Bhutan's first and only Academy Award nominee), about World Cup soccer fever infiltrating the austere world of a Bhutanese monastery, thanks to the introduction of television in 1998.

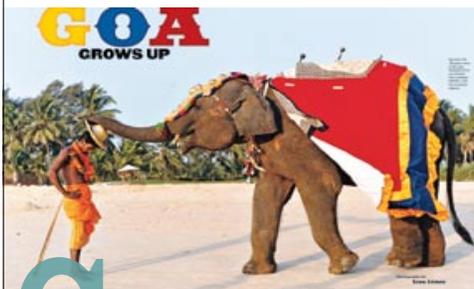
—Cynthia Rosenfeld

DREAM-TRIP CONTEST (See page 42)

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY • For full rules and to enter, go to cntraveler.com/dreamtrip. Contest begins on December 18, 2007, at 2 P.M. ET and ends on September 30, 2008, at 11:59 A.M. ET. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, and Canada who are at least 18 at the time of entry, except employees of Sponsor, their immediate families, and persons living in the same household. Grand prize approximate retail value: \$25,000. Sponsored by the Condé Nast Publications, 4 Times Square, New York, New York 10036.

Goa

[FOR THE FEATURE, SEE PAGE 154]



g oing from North Goa to South Goa takes nearly two hours, so shuttling between the two is not as easy as one might think for such a relatively tiny state. Stay in North Goa if you like buzz and beaches, South Goa if you prefer peace and quiet.

In North Goa, **Calizz** is a collection of restored Portuguese homes that offers a wonderful tour of Goa through the ages (832-325-0000). Visit the **Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary** by boat with guide Uday Mandrekar to spot Goa's many winged visitors (982-258-3127). A number of the luxury hotels have casinos, but for a completely different experience, visit the one aboard the **MV Caravela**,

off Panjim Harbor (832-669-5000). Sample the music scene at **Butter**, a newish nightclub in the heart of Candolim (Candolim-Sinquerim Rd., near Acron Arcade)—or **Sweet Chilli**, where local bands play live music most nights (near Fort Aguarda). **Nine Bar** has funky DJs and is an ideal place to watch the sun set (off Vagator Beach).

The country code for India is 91. Rates quoted are for October 2008.

Lodging

In North Goa, the 140-room **Taj Holiday Village**, which draws Bollywood film stars and Bombay socialites, provides easy access to popular beaches and nightclubs (832-664-5858; doubles, \$175–\$600). The 180-year-old, family-owned, 24-room **Panjim Inn's** greatest asset is its location: bang in the heart of the Latin district, Fontainhas. All around are purple-colored homes, boys playing cricket, and fruit vendors selling plump "loose-jacket" oranges (832-222-6523; doubles, \$40–\$85). Perched atop a hill, the **Nilaya Hermitage** has 11 stylish rooms overlooking the treetops and the twinkling sea. The all-inclusive rate is high but doesn't deter the many repeat guests (832-227-6793; doubles, \$525). In a lovingly restored 300-year-old Portuguese mansion, the seven-room **Siolim House**

[GOA]

has its own eight-cabin sailboat, *Jabuticaba* (832-227-2138; doubles, \$85–\$105). Fashion photographer Denzil Sequeira is the fourth-generation owner of the secluded ten-room **Elsewhere**, where Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are said to have stayed during a recent holiday (932-602-0701; doubles, \$1,970 per week, with a seven-night minimum in high season). Perched high in the Western Ghats, a couple of hours inland, **Wilderness Goa's** 16 eco-cottages are a haven for birdwatchers and nature lovers (988-140-2665; doubles, \$150–\$250).

In South Goa, the 250-room **Park Hyatt**—with hacienda-style villas, five restaurants, an award-winning spa, and a huge free-form pool—is hard to beat (832-272-1234; doubles, \$175–\$245). The 75-acre **Leela** sits along one of Goa's prettiest beaches. The 185 minimalist rooms were recently refurbished, but the service was spotty during my visit (832-287-1234; doubles, \$135–\$705). The charming **Vivenda dos Palhaços**, in the middle of a Goan village, gives a glimpse of rural life—complete with crowing cocks, grunting pigs, and church song. The hosts are friendly, and the seven rooms, while modest, are furnished with flair (832-322-1119; doubles, \$110–\$200).

Dining

In North Goa, **Fiesta** serves Continental food on bustling Baga Beach (7/35 Sauntavado; 832-227-9894; entrées, \$11–\$20). **Souza Lobo** has been offering decent Goan food for some 70 years from a prime spot on Calangute Beach (832-228-1234; entrées, \$7–\$12). **Plantain Leaf** (Calangute Beach Rd.; 832-227-6861; entrées, \$7–\$10) and **Little Italy** (136/1 Gauravaddo, Calangute; 932-601-3324; entrées, \$8–\$15) are nirvana for vegetarians, serving tasty Indian and Italian, respectively. **Lila Café** is known for its all-day breakfast, outdoor seating, and friendly if unhurried service (Arpora-Baga; 832-227-9843; entrées, \$5–\$12). For seafood, hit beach shacks like **Bobby's**, near the taxi stand on Candolim Beach (no phone; entrées,

\$1–\$3), and **Curlies** on Little Anjuna Beach (no phone; entrées, \$1–\$3), which serve fish-and-chips along with the catch of the day. Most of the luxury hotels have noteworthy restaurants. Particularly good are the Thai-themed **Banyan Tree** at Taj Holiday Village (entrées, \$8–\$15), Goan fare at the Park Hyatt's **Casa Sarita** (entrées, \$10–\$18), and the Leela's **Jamavar**, for its opulent Indian (entrées, \$12–\$18).

While South Goa has a lot of homey eateries, it lacks the buzzy restaurants of North Goa. One exception is the family-run **Martins Corner**, renowned for its fish and pork dishes (Binwaddo, Betalbatim, Salcette; 832-288-0413; entrées, \$4–\$10).

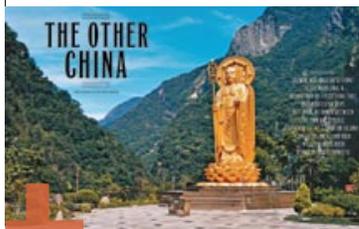
Reading

Candolim's **Oxford Bookstore** has a wide variety of books on Goa (Acron Arcade, Fort Aguada Rd.; 832-287-1391)—including Maria Couto's **Goa: A Daughter's Story**, a well-researched memoir soaked in the state's turbulent past (Penguin, \$17). **Dominic's Goa**, by Dominic Fernandes, is a collection of essays that touches upon pretty much every aspect of daily life (Abbe Faria Productions, \$8). **How to Be an Instant Goan**, by Valentino Fernandes, is easy reading and occasionally hilarious (Diamond Publications, \$4). **Houses of Goa**, a richly photographed coffee table book by Annabel Mascarenhas and Heta Pandit, offers an inside view of Goan life (M&M Publications, \$45).

—Shoba Narayan

Taiwan

[FOR THE FEATURE, SEE PAGE 188]



Taiwan ought to be a stop on anybody's first trip to mainland China, because the story of the island, just 100 miles off the coast, is the other half of mod-

ern Chinese history. You can get a sense of what Communist China might have looked like if Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists had won the civil war 60 years ago. Just a three- or four-day visit (in the fall, after the summer monsoons) will do: two days in Taipei, to take in the National Palace Museum, the grand Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, some of the best provincial Chinese cuisines in the world, and a luxurious hot spring; plus a day or two to hike in the unspoiled mountains, stay at a Buddhist monastery, or see the narrow cliffs of Taroko Gorge.

Taipei, the capital, is not a beautiful city. Its charms are found in the backstreets, where multigenerational families hang out and peddlers on bicycles tout their services (knife sharpening, say) and goods (sweet custard made from bean curd, or *stinky doufu*, a fermented tofu that lives up to its name). But the most important stop in Taipei—indeed in all of Taiwan—is the National Palace Museum, which houses the best of the imperial treasures taken by Chiang's government from the Forbidden City as they evacuated Beijing during the war against Japan (npm.gov.tw).

The country code for Taiwan is 886. Prices quoted are for October 2008.

Lodging

The **Grand Hotel**, with its swooping yellow roof and red columns, is a wonderful throwback to the era of Chiang Kai-shek. The rooms are elegant in an old money way, with painted ceilings and slightly old-fashioned furniture (2-2886-8888; doubles, \$188–\$360). The state-of-the-art **Sherwood** is the opposite: chic amenities and luxury but no history (2-2718-1188; doubles, \$335–\$500). Similarly, the **Grand Hyatt Taipei** has minimalist decor (2-2720-1234; doubles, \$285–\$417), and the Song dynasty-style **Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza** caters to high-end guests such as native son Ang Lee (2-2378-8888; doubles, \$277–\$395). The all-white **Ambience Hotel** is for a much groovier set, with furniture by

Philippe Starck (2-2541-0077; doubles, \$150–\$223). My favorite Taipei hotel is the low-key, elegant, more homey **Les Suites Da-An**, where the buffet breakfast is served in a cozy living room (2-8773-3799; doubles, \$174–\$177).

Outside the city, Beitou's **Villa 32**, with just five suites, is the perfect place to enjoy the island's famous hot springs. Spa treatments are as close to nirvana as you can get without going to a Buddhist monastery (2-6611-8888; suites, \$524–\$819). **Dharma Drum Mountain** is a true retreat where you can do some serious meditation, eat simple vegetarian food in silence, and stroll the lush hills. Overnight stays are available for volunteers only. You'll need an interpreter when calling (2-2893-9966, ext. 6440; contributions only).

Taroko Gorge, outside Hualien city, has a number of pleasant hotels, including the **Grand Formosa Taroko** (3-869-1155; doubles, \$197–\$280). **Leader Village Taroko** is a rustic eco-lodge (simple futon bed, nicely designed bathroom) that provides jobs for the local aboriginal people and supports local culture. When the mist settles on the mountainside in the evening, you feel like you're in a traditional Chinese ink brush painting (3-861-0111; doubles, \$51–\$138).

Down south in Lukang, the hotel choices are fewer. The main place in town, **Leader House Lukang**, is drab but functional (4-778-6699; doubles, \$137–\$173). There's also the newly opened **LK Bed and Breakfast** (4-777-4446; doubles, \$72–\$95). I recommend getting into the local vibe by staying in a motel: These are all the rage among couples plotting trysts (you drive your car into a garage under the room). The **Red Chambers Motel** is particularly swinging, with rooms to fit every taste, from sleek minimalist to kitsch Louis XIV (4-784-1201; doubles, \$68–\$260).

Dining

Shin Yeh serves Taiwanese delicacies like oyster omelets, as well as a set dinner of abalone, shark's fin soup, grouper, sea cu-