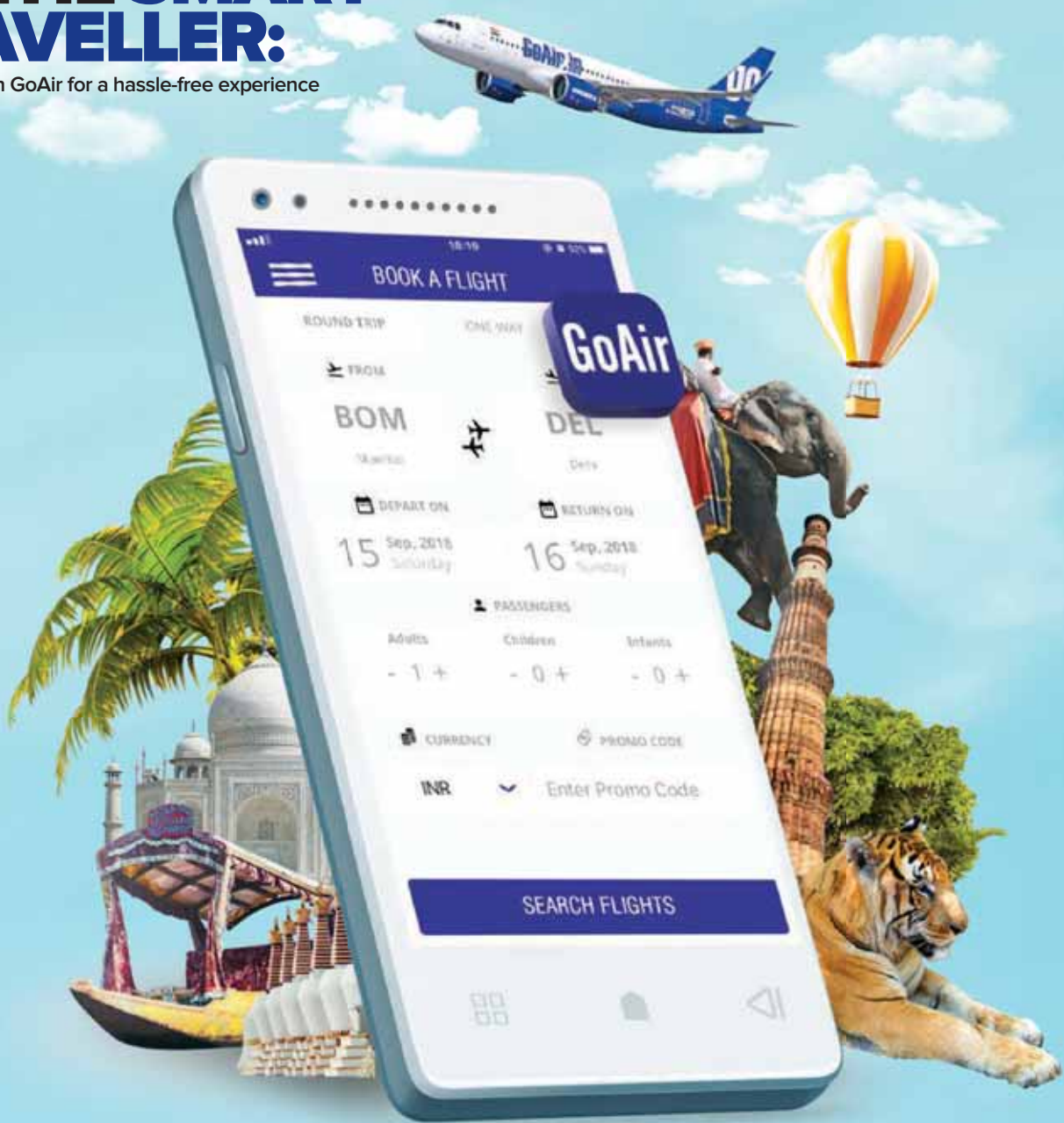


go-getter

GoAir's Exclusive Inflight Magazine

BE THE SMART TRAVELLER:

Fly Smart with GoAir for a hassle-free experience





A GOAN IDYLL

Tucked away from the typically touristy North Goa scene, the village of Assagao is fast becoming a magnet for those seeking some off-the-beaten-path holiday action with its quaint B&Bs, design stores and eclectic dining options.

Text | **RAUL DIAS**

To say that serendipity was at play when the charming Assagao was first discovered would be putting it too mildly. Legend has it that a prince lost in the dense, hilly forest after a bout of hunting heard the early morning crowing of a rooster, heaved a sigh of relief and uttered the words “*assa re ganv!*” or “There is a village, after all!” This led to the name Assagao, which is often supplemented by the moniker ‘Land of Flowers,’ a nickname fondly coined by the locals. The bright orange Flame of the Forest flowers in particular, can be found everywhere one looks.

Devoid of the hustle and bustle one has come to expect of its neighbouring tourist hotspots Anjuna and Vagator, Assagao is fast becoming the de facto hub for all things artsy and creative with its quaint bed and breakfasts (B&Bs), design stores and dining options—each more eclectically designed than the last. We bring you four ways to make the most of your time in this tiny slice of paradise:

DO

A great way to get acquainted with the wonders of Assagao—from its magnificent colonial Portuguese-style homes to the beautiful Church of Saint Cajetan—is by going on a 4 km-long trail with Felly Gomes’ Heritage Walks (livehappygoa.com). Conducted under the aegis of the Live Happy NGO that is working to create a sustainable village model in Assagao, this walk has locals explaining their village’s history and stories, while offering you a taste of goodies like Goan sweets and kokum juice.

How about infusing a bit of live music into your stay? The guys at The Assagao Mehfil (assagaomehfil.com) have just the thing for you. Chinmaya Dunster, a well-known music maestro, and singer-composer Sandeep Srivastava have been hosting monthly live music concerts at the Goan Hotel Astoria since 2013. Performances here range from Sufi invocations to jazz nights. Equally wonderful is a day spent at Apurbai Farms (0832 2268822) where you can learn more about organic farming and how you can bring it into your life.



Facing page: Sunbeam; Frank Bienenwald/ImageBROKER/Dinodia Photo; The Assagao Mehfil; Preshita Deshpande; Yedid Levy/age fotostock/Dinodia Photo



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The terrace and the room entrance at Sunbeam are among the few perfect spots to laze around for hours; colourful papier mâché elephants for sale at the weekly flea market; a mehfil in action; St. Cajetan Church was originally a chapel; a colourful breakfast at one of the many cafes in Assagao.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Colourful fabrics and embroidery work are part of the charm at the People Tree; the wares on display in the verandah of the People Tree store; Red Brick Shop presents the aesthetics of Indian weaves from across the country.



Photos Courtesy: - The People Tree; Preshita Deshpande

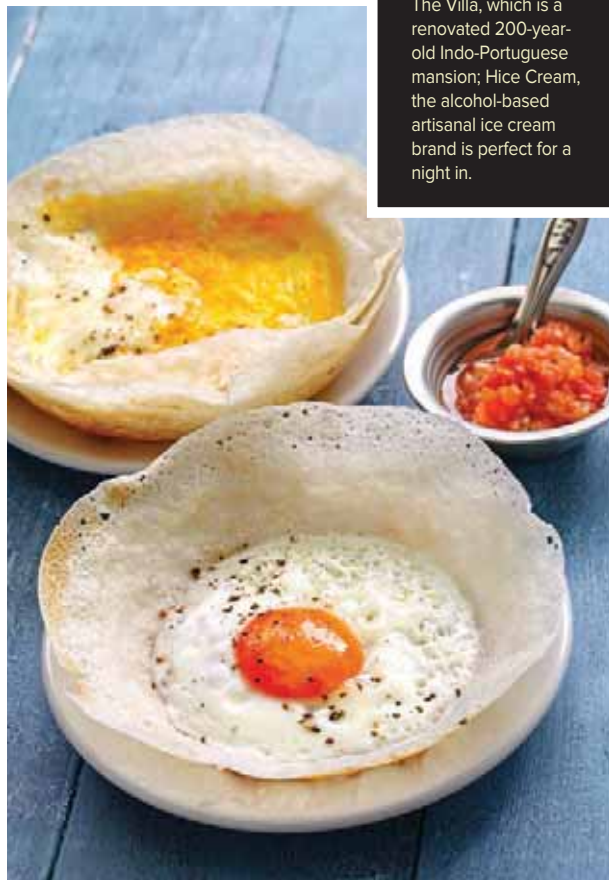
SHOP

Retailing a range of sarees as well as bags, jewellery, homeware and apparel from 10 states across India, Red Brick Shop (redbrickshop.com) located at Bouta Waddo is an icon known for its ethically-sourced products that don't cost the earth. For a more upscale shopping experience visit 6 Assagio (0832 2268228) that stocks both artisanal jewellery and designer threads housed

in a beautifully restored 100-year-old mansion. Make sure you pop into People Tree housed in the same building for home furnishings and objets d'art. Touted to be one of India's first design collectives that set up shop nearly 25 years ago, 6 Assagio focuses on ethical design and eco-fashion sourced from across India.



CLOCK WISE FROM LEFT: Dig into egg appam with chicken Gunpowder; relax at The Villa, which is a renovated 200-year-old Indo-Portuguese mansion; Hice Cream, the alcohol-based artisanal ice cream brand is perfect for a night in.



bonchany/Shutterstock.com; The Villa; Hice Cream

EAT

The very popular restaurant Gunpowder (0832 2268091/0832 2268083) is also housed in the same multipurpose space as 6 Assagao. Here, nosh on regional Indian dishes like zesty mushroom black pepper fry, with South Indian staples such as egg appams. For a varied mix of cuisines ranging from hearty Mexican to chic San Franciscan and from exotic Asian to down-home Indian, have lunch at Ruta's Roadhouse (rutas.in). A cute little day-only restaurant located between Assagao and Anjuna and started by two San Francisco returnees, this is where you will find honest, wholesome comfort food.

For a few pre-dinner drinks, try out Soro (091 9881934440). Soro, which means alcohol in Konkani, bills itself as a local village pub where you can catch up on village gossip with the locals.

To cool off after a particularly indulgent Goan meal, order in some frozen treats from Hice Cream (091 9867691483). Here, you will find artisanal ice cream concoctions dispensed in jars. Try these for starters: Shiver Me Timbers (rum-and-raisin) and the super popular Whiskey Rock-a-Roller (Jack Daniels with organic cocoa).

STAY

Assagao has a superb selection of both hotels and B&Bs to choose from when planning your stay. Book yourselves into the five-bedroom The Villa (airbnb.co.in) for the charming experience of staying in a beautifully-restored historic 200-year-old Indo-Portuguese mansion. This Airbnb-listed property is made up of two distinct living zones: the main historic structure called The Villa and the more modern pool-side garden bungalow called Villa Jardim. All this is spread over one and a half acres of manicured gardens.

Equally well-appointed is the artfully-decorated Sunbeam (justjivi.com), the home of stylist Jivi Sethi that welcomes guests. Flags, crosses and stone Kalinga lions guard and welcome your entrance to the main courtyard of the house that has two palatial bedrooms along with a living room and a dining room.

Situated to the west of Assagao, facing the rice fields and with Anjuna's St. Anthony's Chapel in the background, 30 Assagao (30assagao.wordpress.com) has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large living room, dining hall and an American-style kitchen. The hotel is housed on a 4,275 sq m estate that has a coconut plantation along with mango trees that make this place perfect for a large family vacation—Assagao style.

