

INDIA

Goa: The Yogi's Guide

Temples of Ponda, Old Goa, Konkani festivals, seasons, safety and how to choose a course, checked and dated



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YOGIDE

Free sample

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teacher or medical advice. Questions; administration@lacangel.fr

Before you begin

Every winter, thousands of people fly to Goa to practise yoga: for a teacher training, a retreat, a month of morning classes by the sea. If you are one of them, this guide is for you.

It begins with an honest statement: **Goa is not a historic centre of yoga.** It has no great lineage and no founding ashram. What it has is a dry season, two airports, a long coast and a tourist economy that makes courses easy to organise, so trainings and retreats gather there from October to May. That is a good reason to come. It is simply not the same reason as going to Rishikesh or Mysore, and knowing the difference helps you choose well.

Goa also has something many visitors never see: one of the richest sacred landscapes of western India. Inland, at Ponda, stand temples of Śiva and of the Goddess whose deities were carried there in the sixteenth century. In the forest of the Western Ghats, a small temple of black basalt has stood since the twelfth century. At Old Goa, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the tomb of Saint Francis Xavier draws pilgrims from all over India. This guide helps you practise seriously, and see that Goa too.

You will not find any ranking, review or recommendation of a school, teacher or retreat centre in these pages. That is deliberate. This book gives you the context, the practical facts and the questions that let you choose for yourself. It is built on three promises.

First, practical facts are checked and dated. Every practical fact in this guide was checked online on **16 October 2026** against the most official source we could find, listed at the end. When only unofficial or contradictory information existed, we say so and tell you where to confirm. When we could not verify something, we left it out.

Second, no invented experiences. No testimonials, no "when I was in Goa" anecdotes, no reviews. A legend is called a legend; a date comes with its source.

Third, the sacred is treated as sacred. Goa's temples and churches are places of living worship, not backdrops for photographs. This guide explains customs so that you can visit without causing offence, and writes Sanskrit and Konkani words correctly, in Devanagari.

This guide informs; it does not replace official advice.

Before you travel, read your government's travel advice for India, check the official Indian e-Visa website yourself, and see a travel health professional. In an emergency in India, dial **112**, the national emergency number (UK FCDO travel advice, accessed 16 October 2026).

How to read Sanskrit and Konkani words

Sanskrit words appear in Devanagari with the scholarly IAST transliteration (सूर्य नमस्कार, sūrya namaskāra). Konkani words appear in Devanagari, the official script of Konkani in Goa, with a simple transliteration close to the way Goans write Konkani in Roman letters (देव बरें करूं, dev boreṃ korum).

IAST	Sounds roughly like	Example
ā, ī, ū	long a, ee, oo	āsana
ś, ṣ	"sh" (two different sounds)	Śiva, Viṣṇu
c	"ch" as in church	cakra
ṭ, ḍ, ṇ, ḷ	tongue curled back	Mhāṭṣā
ṅ	"ng"	Maṅgeśa
ṁ	nasal hum	oṁ

In Konkani transliteration, "x" is said like "sh" (xakahari, vegetarian).

How to use this book

Deciding when to go: Chapters 2 and 3. Ticket booked: Chapters 9 to 11. Choosing a course: Chapter 13, before you pay anything. In Goa: Chapters 5 to 8, then the checklist and the Konkani phrases (Chapters 15 and 16).

Chapter 1. Goa in legend and history

A land between the hills and the sea

Goa is the smallest state of India by area: the Government of Goa gives its area as **3,702 km²**, its capital as **Panaji** (also written Panjim) and its language as **Konkani** (goa.gov.in, About Goa State). It lies on the strip of land between the Western Ghats, the Sahyādrī (सह्याद्री) range, and the Arabian Sea: the Konkan (कोंकण) coast, whose language is Konkani (कोंकणी).

Paraśurāma and the land won from the sea

The best-known founding legend concerns **Paraśurāma** (परशुराम), "Rāma with the axe", the sixth avatar of Viṣṇu. The official website of South Goa district tells it this way: "It is believed that Sixth Avatar of Vishnu Sage, Parshuram created the Sahyadri range and struck an arrow into the western seas", and "the arrow is said to have sent the seas rolling back to create Gomantak or Goa" (southgoa.nic.in). Gomantak (गोमंतक) is the old name of Goa, still used by newspapers and institutions.

The official text presents it as a legend ("it is believed", "is said"), and so do we. For those who tell it, it explains why this land between mountains and sea is sacred: it was given, not merely found. A temple of Paraśurāma stands at Poinguinim, in Canacona (Chapter 5).

Temples and dynasties

Long before its beaches were famous, Goa was a land of ports, rice fields and temples. The Government of Goa notes that the **Kadamba dynasty ruled Goa between the tenth and fourteenth centuries**; it describes the temple of Tambdi Surla, the oldest standing in Goa, as built in the twelfth century in black basalt (goa.gov.in, Tambdi Surla Temple).

The Portuguese centuries

From the early sixteenth century until 1961, Goa was a Portuguese possession. UNESCO calls it "the former capital of the Portuguese Indies", whose churches and convents "illustrate the evangelization of Asia". The oldest of the seven monuments in UNESCO's record, the Chapel of Saint Catherine, is dated **1510**.

For Hindu Goa, these centuries were a time of upheaval. Temples in Portuguese territory were destroyed (India's Ministry of Tourism records, for example, that the original Mahalasa temple at Verna was razed), and several deities were carried inland, into territory then ruled by Adil Shah. That is why Goa's great temples stand in the **Ponda** area rather than on the coast. The Government of Goa states that the deity of Shri Mangesh was moved from Kushasthali (Cortalim) to Priol, and that "the shifting of the deity took place in the year 1560". The Shantadurga temple's website states that, according to Portuguese records, its deities were moved from Keloshi (Quellossim) to Kavlem in 1566.

Liberation, statehood and language

On **19 December 1961**, Goa was annexed by India; on **30 May 1987**, it became a state (Kushavati district website, History). 19 December, Goa Liberation Day, is a public holiday. In 1987, the Goa, Daman and Diu Official Language Act made **Konkani in the Devanagari script** the official language of Goa, while allowing Marathi to be used too (Department of Information and Publicity, Languages of Goa). In 1992, Konkani was added to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (Ministry of Home Affairs). Konkani is also written in the Roman alphabet, which you will see in churches.

What this history means for a yogi

Goa has three layers: Hindu temples that survived by moving inland, a Catholic heritage recognised by UNESCO, and a modern tourist economy on the coast. The yoga schools belong to the third. Goa's sacred life is lived in the first two. Give time to all three.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 46 pages.

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