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10 Top Experiences

1 Chilling at Palolem

If there’s one enduring image of tropical beaches and sun-kissed sands in the country it ought to be Palolem Beach (p120) – a haven of calm among the line of touristy beaches dotting Goa’s coastline. Set around a small bay, the beach, lapped by gentle waves, can lull and soothe you into a pleasant holiday mood. It’s the sort of beach where people do yoga on the smooth sands at dawn and where stylish huts nestled between the trees are the choice for accommodation. The best thing to do at Palolem, though, is to sit back in the evening, order a tall, cool cocktail and sip it slowly as you watch the sun dip into the deep waters of the Arabian Sea.

2 Sunset on the Konkan Riviera

Starting a little before Ganpatipule (p62) and stopping before the turn-off to Ratnagiri is a smooth ribbon of road clinging to the edge of the hills, threatening to fall into the sea below. For those who are constantly in search of epic sunsets, this 6km drive from Undi Beach (p65) to Aarey Warey Beach (p65) offers meditative moments in a magnificent blaze of blue and orange, guaranteed to bring the hunt to a grinding halt.

3 Snorkelling & Diving at Havelock

The Andamans’ main island, Havelock (p204), has a variety of activities to offer but none as delightful as scuba diving (p207) and snorkelling. Dive into the blue and venture underwater into a magical new world full of tropical fish, live coral, sea turtles, stingrays and other wonders. Havelock is also one of the few places in the world where inexperienced divers can try out a single dive instead of signing up for a whole course. The best part is that you don’t need to be a swimmer to try this adventurous activity. If you fancy staying above the surface, snorkelling is a good option. With the clear visibility underwater, you’re sure to see enough to give you a vivid insight into the world that lies beneath the sea.
The sea here is abundant with colourful corals and marine life

Beaches Overview

Nestled in the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is one of the prettiest archipelagos you can possibly imagine. It has some of the top diving destinations in the country, and offers a number of stunning beaches where you can simply watch the sea change colour while lazing on the white sands. Fly into Port Blair, from where ferries carry you to the most developed and popular holiday island – Havelock. You can also make a trip to Neil Island or a day visit to Ross Island.

Getting There & Away

Air: Port Blair Airport has flights from all major cities from the country including New Delhi (JetKonnect, SpiceJet, Go Air, IndiGo), Mumbai (Go Air, Air India and JetLite), Kolkata (JetLite, Air India), Bhubaneswar (Air India, Jet Lite), Chennai (Air India, Go Air and Jet Lite) and Kochi (Jet Airways and Air India).

Boat: There are weekly boats from Chennai (044-25226873, Chennai Port); and fortnightly from Kolkata (www.shipindia.com) to Port Blair.
HAVELOCK ISLAND
With crystal blue waters, white-sand beaches and lush forests, peace and quiet find a new definition on Havelock Island. The most action you'll get here is in the water itself – snorkelling, swimming and scuba diving – though there are a few occasional musical nights with beers on the beach. Here’s a promise, though: the waters of Havelock are so pristine and mesmerising, you won’t be complaining about the lack of phone and internet connectivity. After a glimpse of that soft white sand and the gradients of blue in the ocean, you will understand why this tiny island has become a favourite amongst beach connoisseurs. To experience the full beauty of Havelock, visit the individual attractions described below. It is easy to rent cabs, autos or two-wheelers to get around.

RADHANAGAR BEACH, HAVELOCK
Also called Beach No.7, this is the most spectacular stretch of sand in Havelock, framed by the wave-lashed ocean on one side and tall rainforests on the other. The beach is amazing at sunset since it faces the west. Walk for about 10 minutes down the beach and you will come to Neil’s Cove, a beautiful and quiet spot, abundant with rocks, perfect for sunbathing. Further up you’ll come to a quiet lagoon where the shallow water is great for swimming and snorkelling.

VIJAYNAGAR BEACH, HAVELOCK
Popularly known as Beach No.5, this is where most diving centres, hotels and restaurants are located. Despite the commercial row of stalls, the beach is clean and inviting, though swimming can be hard as the waters are shallow and interspersed with rocks. This beach faces the east and is good to watch the sun’s first rays arriving in India.

Quick Facts: Reaching Havelock
- Ferry: All departures are subject to weather conditions. The government ferry from Port Blair to Havelock takes 2.5hr and departs at 6am, 11.30am & 2pm (₹150–250). The MV Makruzz private ferry takes 90min; ₹815 premium, ₹950 deluxe; (03192–212355, 236677; www.makruzz.com). Coastal Cruise (www.coastalcruise.in) is another new entrant that has the same rates as Makruzz.
- Sea Plane: Nine passengers per plane; leaves Port Blair at 7.45am and 12.45pm, 20min; ₹4100/person (one way). Book at 03192–244312.
Tango Beach Resort Resort ₹
03192 28 2583, 947 42 12 84; www.
tangobeachandaman.com; Beach
No. 1; d ₹1700–5000 This resort
offers a variety of rooms and cottages.
Though the thatched huts are more
charming, the rooms fitted with ACs
would be more comfortable for city
dwellers. The restaurant looks right
onto the sea.

PORT BLAIR
Annapurna North/South Indian ₹
03192–234199; MG Rd This
popular eating spot in Port Blair serves
good South Indian fare – their dosas,
idlis and coffee make for a great
breakfast. North Indian food is also
available on the menu.

Lighthouse Residency Restaurant ₹
MA Rd, Aberdeen Bazaar At
this bustling restaurant, the air-
conditioning is cranked up, the beer
cold and seafood fresh. Choose from
the display of red snapper, crab and
tiger prawns. The BBQ fish is nice.

HAVELOCK ISLAND
The Red Snapper Seafood ₹
03192–28 2472; Wild Orchid Resort;
Vijaynagar Beach Considered one of
the best places here, it can be pricey
(₹1500 for a meal for two). They serve
a great fish fry and have a selection of
fresh seafood on offer. Their desserts
are heavenly, especially the crème
caramel. Swing by for drinks and live
bands. The bar closes at 10.45pm.

B3 – Barefoot Bar & Brasserie Continental ₹
Village No 1; Havelock Jetty You’ll
spot B3 easily by its beautiful wooden
deck on the first floor. The menu has
Western and Indian dishes and offers
the best pizzas in town.

Full Moon Cafe Multi-Cuisine ₹
Govind Nagar Beach Everything on
the vast and imaginative menu is a
success, and people flock here from all
over the island to get a pancake, falafel
roll, grilled fish, Indian curry, salad or
pasta. Attached to DiveIndia, this is a
post-diving hub with great energy, but
welcomes non-divers too.

The Lee Meridian
German Bakery Restaurant ₹
The circular restaurant is large and
airy and quite the hang-out spot in
Havelock. They offer an extensive
breakfast menu and also serve Chinese,
North Indian, Mexican and Israeli.

Anju Coco Restaurant ₹
Just next to Lee Meridian, this open
eatery with a thatched roof ensures
personalised service. It serves North
Indian and seafood (try the lemon
pepper prawn), and a range of shakes
and juices. You will lust after the
banoffee shake.

Fat Martin Cafe Veg/South Indian ₹
This tiny spot is just off the main road
and serves a selection of South Indian
food. Try their vast range of dosas,
which includes the Nutella dosa!

NEIL ISLAND
Dhaba Delights ₹
Grab a Bengali meal at the main
market (₹130/thali). Delicious, hot and
authentic, these generous portions
won’t leave you complaining.

Moonshine Restaurant ₹
Beach No.1 This restaurant on the
road to Beach No 1 makes excellent
home-made pasta that can be washed
down with cold beer.

Expert Recommendation
Best of the Andaman Islands

Ad guru Prahlad Kakkar founded his dive school,
Lacavides, in Lakshadweep 15 years ago. His new dive
centre is at Chidiya Tapu, South Andamans.

DIVING & SNORKELLING
Off Port Blair There are two major
sites at Cinque Island, accessible
only from Chidiya Tapu, 25km from
Port Blair. The first site is shallow
with colourful corals. The deeper
diving site flows with currents and
offers beautiful marine life, including
sting-rays and turtles that come to
feed here.

Red Skin Island is a good place
for beginners to start off their
underwater adventures. Go
snorkelling at Wandoor. A good
variety of fish and coral life and
if you’re lucky, even a saltwater
crocodile awaits here.

Chidiya Tapu Here the waters are
filled with healthy coral, beautiful
snappers, fusiliers, rays, turtles and
the occasional manta. Mundapahad
is for beginners and the old shipwreck
is a site is for advanced divers and
home to anemones, clown fish,
schooling snapper, resting ray, and
colonies of colourful corals.

Havelock Island Beach No. 5 has
popular sites for diving and
snorkelling and the leading dive
schools are all based there (p204).

BIRDWATCHING
Let not the beauty of its beaches
and marine life overshadow
Andamans’ flora and fauna. The
marriage of mangroves, rainforests
with migratory birds and flowers at
Chidiya Tapu, also called Bird Island is
truly unique.

CHILDREN’S SPECIAL
Lacavides, Reef Watch and local
group Anet have collaborated to
host regular training and school
programmes at Wandoor on marine
environment consciousness and
basic snorkelling tips.