









A quieter Goa

The Postcard Netravali: Goa's hidden oasis in the Western Ghats

There is a version of Goa that exists far beyond its beaches, beach shacks and familiar holiday rhythms. Head inland, towards the forested hills of South Goa, and the landscape begins to change. The roads wind through villages, the air grows cooler, the canopy gets denser and the sound of traffic gradually gives way to birdsong and running water. In the middle of this quieter Goa, in Netravali, lies The Postcard Hideaway, a 20-acre retreat surrounded by greenery and the hills of the Western Ghats. With just 20 rooms, the property is designed less as a conventional resort and more as a place to disappear into nature.

A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Netravali is in Sanguem taluka in South Goa and is considerably removed from the state's better-known coastal circuit. The Postcard Hideaway is approximately 68.9km from Dabolim Airport, with the resort estimating a drive of around one hour and 20 minutes. From Manohar International Airport at Mopa, the distance is approximately 121km, with a drive of about two hours and 30 minutes.

The drive itself is part of the experience. As the route moves inland, the scenery becomes increasingly rural and green, eventually bringing you into the Netravali landscape. This is not Goa designed for a checklist holiday.

Netravali is also home to the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary, and the area is known for its forests, waterfalls and lesser-known natural attractions. One of its best-known sights is the Bubbling Lake, locally called Budbudyanche Taley, where bubbles continuously rise through the water.

A HIDEAWAY IN THE FOREST

The Postcard Hideaway is built around the idea of blending into its surroundings. The 20 rooms are designed to sit unobtrusively within the greenery, each with a patio that opens towards the natural landscape. The views extend towards the surrounding hills and Western Ghats, and there is a sense of privacy that is increasingly difficult to find at larger resorts.

And then there is the possibility of wildlife. The wider Netravali landscape is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna, including giant squirrels and great pied hornbills. The Postcard also mentions the possibility of spotting black panthers in the region. Such sightings are naturally unpredictable.

WELLNESS WITHOUT THE USUAL RUSH

At The Postcard Hideaway, wellness begins with the setting. There is no need to manufacture a sense of calm when the surroundings already provide it. The resort has a spa where guests can indulge in wellness treatments, while the pool and outdoor spaces offer plenty of opportunities to simply slow down. Yoga and other wellness experiences can also be arranged, allowing guests to build a day around their own pace rather than a fixed schedule.

The experience is less about a packed itinerary of treatments and more about allowing the environment to slow you down. A spa treatment can be followed by time beside the pool or simply an afternoon spent listening to the sounds of the forest. For those who want to explore rather than stay still, there are nature walks and excursions around Netravali. Forest paths, streams and waterfalls provide an opportunity to experience the Western Ghats.

SPICE TRAIL AT TANSHIKAR

One of the most rewarding experiences around Netravali is a visit to Tanshikar Spice Farm, a working organic farm in the region. The farm offers visitors a glimpse into Goa's agricultural traditions, with guided walks through its spice gardens and plantations. It is a fascinating change of pace from the conventional sightseeing experience because the landscape itself becomes the attraction.

Walking through a spice plantation gives context to flavours that are usually encountered only after they have reached the kitchen. Pepper, vanilla, cardamom and other spices grow alongside tropical vegetation, while the farm's organic approach places emphasis on traditional cultivation and a closer relationship with the land.

Tanshikar also offers cottages and farm experiences, making it possible to spend more time within the plantation environment.

The food is an important part of the experience. After exploring the spice gardens, guests can sit down to a traditional Goan meal, bringing together the produce, spices and culinary traditions of the region. For anyone interested in food, this is perhaps one of the most memorable parts of a Netravali stay. You see the spices growing in the soil, learn about the plants and then encounter those flavours on the plate.

FOOD THAT BELONGS TO THE LANDSCAPE

Back at The Postcard Hideaway, the food follows the same philosophy of locality. The resort sources ingredients from its own organic garden and focuses on Goan culinary traditions. Among the highlights are the Panjim-style *ros* omelette and the Konkan *thali*. There is something particularly appropriate about eating a Goan *thali* while looking out at the hills where many of the region's culinary traditions have evolved.

The emphasis on the resort's own organic garden adds another layer to the experience.

BEYOND THE RESORT

A stay in Netravali is also an opportunity to explore a different side of South Goa. There is the Bubbling Lake, where bubbles rise through the water at regular intervals, creating one of the area's most unusual natural phenomena.

There are also waterfalls, forest trails and opportunities for birdwatching in the Netravali region. Mainapi Waterfall and Bamanbudo Waterfall are among the natural attractions that can be explored around South Goa, while the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary offers a closer encounter with the Western Ghats.

But perhaps the biggest attraction is what you do not find here. There are no crowds pressing you towards the next restaurant or beach club.

In a state that has long been one of India's most visited holiday destinations, finding a place that still feels like a secret may be the ultimate luxury.

Zeba Akhtar Ali
Pictures: By the writer and The Postcard Hotel

1. **The view of the Western Ghats.**
2. **The luxury room with a private sit-out promises uninterrupted views of the forest.**
3. **The infinity pool is surrounded by lush greenery on all sides and is almost like a secret oasis in the middle of the thick jungle.**
4. **Jacuzzi with a view? Yes, please.**
5. **The property is also known for its many spa treatments, and what better than getting a massage right in the lap of nature?**
6. **Organic farming is a major facet of the hotel's culinary philosophy, and most of the produce is grown in-house or sourced from local farms.**
7. **The signature Goan *thali*.**
8. **A must-visit is the nearby Tanshikar Farms.**
9. **A closer look at the mace plant that gives both mace and nutmeg.**