

Perched high on a cliff, overlooking the confluence of the Arabian Sea and the Terekhol River, stands the most unique small hotel in the remote wild north of Goa - the Tiracol Fort Heritage Hotel.

Taken over by Claudia and Hari Ajwani (of the Nilaya Hermitage fame) in September 2002, the Tiracol Fort was lovingly restored over four months to its present day *avatar* - a beautiful intimate getaway for couples in love, small families or a reunion of friends, who are looking for a distinctive way to spend a short holiday in Goa.

The Tiracol Fort is over four hundred years old - built in the 16th century by the Bhonsale Dynasty and later conquered by the Portuguese in 1746. In the same year, a chapel was constructed within the walls of the fort, which today forms the centerpiece of the hotel. The fort has witnessed many battles - both between the absolutist and liberal factions of the Portuguese in the 19th century as well as between Indian freedom fighters and the Portuguese prior to 1961.

Today the fort is a chic seven-room hotel with accommodation that overlooks the sweeping palm-fringed Goan coastline and the wide expanse of the Arabian Sea. The rooms themselves are simple but elegant - styled in black and white, with a *mélange* of rattan furniture, metal artwork on the walls, and crisp white cotton bedspreads. There is a delightful lounge and bar, and the restaurant - *al fresco* dining on the terrace of the fort overlooking the sea. Completely dreamy! The menu is delicious Goan - try a hot and spicy



vindaloo (toned down for western palates) accompanied by a nice white Sula.

There is plenty to do in Tiracol - sleep, dream, and... sleep. Just kidding! Visit the beautiful sunny beaches of Arambol and Morjem, go dolphin-watching by speedboat, walk into the little village of Terekhol, or take the ferry across to Kiranpani to watch the fishermen haul in their catch.

Getting to Tiracol is quite easy and a lot of fun. Upon arriving at Goa's airport you can rent a self-drive car (driving in

Goa is safe, easy and enjoyable) or be chauffeur driven to Tiracol. Winding roads, pretty villages, and the desolate beaches of Morjem and Arambol lead you to a jetty on the banks of the Terekhol. A mad-cap ferry will take you and your car across (honk if you want a special transfer for Rs. 50/-). And then you drive five minutes up a hill to your own little medieval fort for a few days of relaxation, delicious food and a spectacular view.

About the author: Ashish Gupta runs his own travel company, Milesworth Holidays, an American Express Travel office in Chennai. He specializes in customized tours to popular and exotic destinations in India and overseas.

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