

GOKARNA

a map made by Zostel
for young travellers

FREE MAP • KARNATAKA



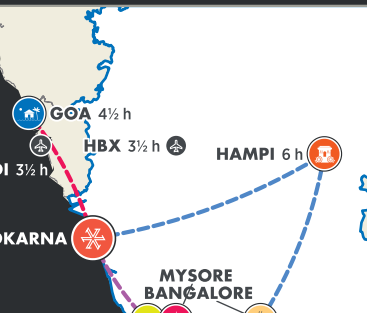
LIVE IT. NOW



... AN IDEA
Beach trek to the capital
From Kunta's station, half an hour down the coast, one train a day runs the length of India to India Gate at dusk in Delhi.

Keep Zosteling
Every place we're live, on one map, Gokarna is one, pick your next.

111+ 80+
Zostels destinations
5M+ since 2013



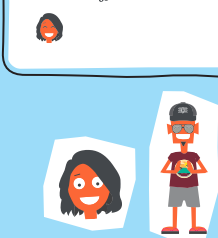
Around Gokarna, by road
Drive times from our Zostel in Gokarna
Goa 4½ h
Up the coast to Goa 4½ h
Over the Ghats to the boulders
Hampi 6½ h Bangalore 6½ h
Into the coffee hills
Coorg 8½ h Mysore 4½ h
HBX 3½ h, GOI 3½ h
Gokarna Road 14 km

India and its states: DataMeet (CC BY 4.0), the Survey of India outline. Roads, airports, station: © OpenStreetMap contributors; drive times by FOSSGIS OSRM, scaled to Zostel's own published times (2026-10). Pins nudged apart where they crowd; edge pins point the way. Flights and trains change; check before you plan.



Namaskara, Gokarna!

Namaskara! We're the Gokarna Zobus, and there are two Gokarnas. One is the old temple town between two river mouths: Car Street's tiled roofs, the Mahabaleshwar temple, the Kottiteertha tank and, at Shivaratri, a chariot rolling down the street. The other starts over the red headland to the south: Kudle, Om's two joined crescents, Half Moon and Paradise, strung on a path through the cashew trees. Walk it early with water and proper shoes, take a boat back, and swim only where it's calm: never at the main beach. Eat the day's fish with neer dosa, say dhanyavada, and come home to our cliff over the sea.



Stay with us in Gokarna

A Zostel on the cliff above the main beach, and Zo Selections Gokarna among the gardens on Om Beach Road.

Zostel Gokarna

On the cliff above the main beach, on Kudle Beach Road. The bus stand is a short auto ride.

Zo Selections Gokarna

Live the Art of Escape. On Om Beach Road, a seven-minute drive from Om Beach.

Maps: © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), data fetched 2026-10-13 (UTC). Terrain: Terrain Tiles on AWS (Mapzen/Tilezen), from SRTM courtesy of NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey, Walk Lines routed by FOSSGIS OSRM on OpenStreetMap. The beach trek: Kudle, Om, Half Moon, Paradise drawn from OpenStreetMap's diff-path pieces, joined where they stop short. Drawings: the Zostel brand's own. Things change; check the day's timings at the gate.

Every number is a tip on the map overlaid, in the colour of its kind: ● Two Gokarnas
● Beach, Headland, Beach
● Meenu Oota, Please
● Chariots and Cashew Groves
● One More Sunset at Kudle. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there.

Practical tips

Getting in

Gokarna Road station, on the Konkani Railway, is about 10 km from town; Ankola, about 20 km, and Kunta, about 30 km, see more trains, and government buses run from both. Buses from Bangalore, Goa, Hubli, Mangalore and Pune stop at the town's bus stand: Zostel Gokarna is a short auto ride on. Zo Selections about 25 minutes by taxi. Goa's Dabolim airport is about 140 km north.

Beach to beach

The main beach and Om have roads to the sand, and Kudle is a short walk down from its road. Half Moon and Paradise are reached only on foot or by boat: shared boats run between the beaches in season, and you agree the fare before you step in. In the monsoon the boats stop and the paths turn slippery.

Don't swim at the main beach

The main Gokarna beach has strong currents, and drownings there are reported season after season: walk it, don't swim it. Paradise has rocks and undercurrents too. Swim at Kudle or in Om's calmer inlet, near the shore and the lifeguards, and keep back from the headlands' edges.

When to come

October to March is the season: dry, the sea calm, the beaches busy, so book early around the festivals. March to May gets hot and sticky. The monsoon, June to September, brings heavy rain: boats and water sports stop and the trek is slippery, but the waterfalls inland come alive.

At the temple's gate

Shoes off at every temple, and ask before you go in. The Mahabaleshwar temple keeps a dress code: men in a dhoti, shirts off; women in a saree or salwar; no jeans or shorts. Its inner shrine is closed to non-Hindus.

Kit for the trek

Start early: the path climbs over rocky headlands and is not by late morning. Wear real shoes or trekking sandals, carry 2 litres of water each, a hat and sunscreen, and follow the red and white arrows painted on the rocks. Stay off the forest paths after dark, and tell someone your route.

Cash and cards

Carry some cash. The ATMs are in town and can run dry in the season; by the beaches there are few or none, and a beach shack may not take cards. Both our homes take cards and UPI.

The beach trek: Kudle, Om, Half Moon, Paradise

6 km • about 5 hours with stops • 6 stops

Up the steps past Ramatirtha's spring, down to Kudle's west-facing sand, over the red headland past cashew trees to Om's two crescents, round the hill to quiet Half Moon, over the rocks to Paradise, then a shared boat back. Start early; carry water.



The stops

- 11 Gokarna Beach (the main beach)**
Find the steps at the south end, past the fisherman's wooden boats.
- 10 Ramatirtha and the cliff path**
Look for the spring by the little Rama temple, still running.
- 22 Kudle Beach**
Look for the hammocks on the café verandahs behind the palms.
- 18 Om Beach**
Look at the rocky point splitting the two crescent bays.
- 15 Half Moon Beach**
Look at the clear blue water against the woods behind the sand.
- 14 Paradise Beach (Full Moon Beach)**
Look for the pockets of sand between the rocks, and boats waiting.

A temple town first

Gokarna is a pilgrimage town before it is a beach town. Dress modestly in the lanes, keep beachwear for the beaches, and keep your voice down round Car Street and the tank.

Off the grid past Om

Mobile data is strong round the main beach and the temple and weakens near Om and the beaches beyond, so download your maps and tickets before the trek. At Half Moon most shacks have no electricity: charge your phone, a power bank and a torch the night before, and carry cash for the boat and the shacks, since a payment app may not connect.

Which way on the path

After Om the path to Half Moon forks: right is the coast route, left the forest route, and both arrive. Early in the season, mind the thorns in the bushes. Past Half Moon's first rocks, go round the hill rather than up it: the steep climb leads to Belekani village instead of Paradise. Stay on the marked trail.

Boats: the jacket, and room to spare

The boats between the beaches run only when the sea is calm, and most stop in the monsoon. Put the life jacket on before you sit down, and skip a boat that is already full: an overloaded tourist boat once capsized on the Aghanashini near Tadadi, and the life jackets brought everyone ashore.

Solo, and after sunset

Plenty of people come to Gokarna on their own, and Zostel Gokarna has a female-only dorm. The cliff and forest paths between the beaches are unlit and empty after sunset, so walk them in daylight and come back by boat before dark or by road: Om has a road and autos to town, and a path from Kudle's south end climbs to a road.

5 minutes of history

In the legend A cow's ear

The story goes that a king of Lanka, tricked at dusk on this shore, handed the gift he was carrying home to a boy, who set it down; it could never be lifted again. Go-karna is Sanskrit for a cow's ear.

c. 345 to 525

The Kadambas build in stone
The Kadambas, ruling from Banavasi in this same district, held the coast, the first stone temple of Mahabaleshwar is credited to their founder, Mayurasharma.

4th century

The Lord of Gokarna

The poet Kalidasa has his hero reach the southern sea and the 'Lord of Gokarna' in the Raghuvamsha; the Mahabharata names the place too. The temple is said to go back to this century.

14th to 16th century

Vijayanagara's grants

Kings of Vijayanagara, Harihara I and Bukka Raya I among them, give land, and the temple grows into the complex of shrines seen today. After Vijayanagara falls, the Nayakas of Sonda look after it.

16th century

The Pepper Queen

Chennabhairadevi of Gersoppa rules this coast for 54 years and ships pepper to Surat; the Portuguese call her Rainha da Pimenta, the Pepper Queen. Mirjan Fort, on the Aghanashini, is said to be hers.

1569

The Portuguese on Honnavar

Down the coast the Portuguese take Honnavar and build a small fort, which holds against a siege in 1571. A Portuguese gold coin of 1652 was later dug up at Mirjan.

1676

An Englishman at Shivaratri

The English traveller John Fryer comes to Gokarna for the Maha Shivaratri festival and writes it up in detail.

1862 to 1956

Bombay, then Mysore

The British make Karwar the headquarters of the North Kanara, part of the Bombay Presidency. In 1956 the district joins Mysore State, renamed Karnataka in 1973.

1970s, then 1990s

The travellers find the beaches

The first foreigners arrive in the early 1970s, and the first huts and rooms go up for rent. From the early 1990s the backpackers come in numbers, looking for an alternative to Goa.

1998

The Konkani Railway

On 26 January 1998 the whole Konkani Railway, Roha to Mangalore, is inaugurated, cut through hills and over rivers; Gokarna Road station stands on it, about 10 km from town.

Talk like a local

Namaskara

Hallo, said with folded hands num-us-kaa-ra

Dhanyavada

Thank you: save it for real kindness dhun-yuh-va-da

Banni

Come in, welcome bun-nee

Sari

Okay, alright suh-ree

Beda

Don't want it, no thanks bay-da

Eshtu?

How much? esh-too

Eat like a Gokarna local

Gokarna eats from two kitchens. The temple town's vegetarian, Udupi-style: dosas, idlis and a thali on Car Street. The coast's is fish: kane and bangude rava-fried, fish curry with rice, coconut and kokum in the pot. Then the beach cafés, pancakes and prawns with sand on your feet. The joints first, then the dishes to hunt down.

Pai Restaurant

Dosas, and Mangalore buns in the morning, a rice-plate thali at lunch.

"Two Pais, no relation. Eat at both, then argue."

Premu. A veg thali, then a gadbad: the coast's tall glass of ice cream, jelly, fruit and nuts.

"Thali for one, gadbad for two."

Meenu

Fish mee-noo

Oota

A meal, rice and all oota

Rathabeedi

Chariot street: Car Street ruth-uh-bee-dee

Nuste

Fish, in Konkani noos-tay

Shree Shakti. Traditional veg thalis and curries, and the cold stop: ice cream, fruit juice, lassi.

"After the temple town's heat: a lassi, cold."

Mahalaxmi Restaurant. Zostel's budget pick: South Indian thalis and local meals, and a pasta regulars swear by.

"Plain room, full plate, before the beach."

Dattaprasad Tiffin Centre. Breakfast by the temple tank: idlis soft enough to be called fluffy, and masala dosas.

"Idli first, Kottiteertha after."

Open House Fishland. The fish thali, kane or bangude rava-fried, cooked with Byadgi chillies, kokum and coconut.

"Fish thali, then a siesta. That's the plan."

Honni Mane Home Fish Food. Konkani-style fish meals in a family home: a fish thali, and pomfret rava-fried when it's in.

"Lunch in somebody's house. Thank the cook."

Chez Christophe. A Frenchman's kitchen: wood-fired pizzas, crêpes, fresh bread and a chocolate almond tart.

"The last night's dinner, facing the sea."

Dolphin View Restaurant. Zostel's go-to for fresh seafood, with dolphins in the water on a lucky day.

"Eat slowly. Watch for fins."

19 Namaste Cafe. Om Beach's iconic café: prawn masala, kingfish sizzler, fried bangude; banana pancakes in the morning.

"Prawns after the swim, then the sunset."

Om Shree Ganesh. Zostel's guide puts it first for vegetarian fare: home-style meals, fresh juices, friendly service.

"Homely meals and a fresh juice."

21 Sunset Cafe, Kudle.

Grilled fish, rice pudding and chocolate pancakes, with the sun going into the sea.

"Come early. Stay till the sky's done."

13 Paradise Beach's shacks. In season, a few shacks with pineapple, water and sweets.

"Pineapple at the end of the trail tastes better."

Dishes to hunt down

Fish thali. The coast's lunch: rice, a fish curry of coconut and chilli, and enough of both to need a siesta.

Kane and bangude rava fry. Kane (ladyfish) and bangude (mackerel), coated in rava and fried crisp, pomfret, kingfish and seer too, fried, roasted or curried.

Fish curry and rice. The district's staple: fish in a curry of coconut, tamarind and chilli, with boiled rice, in coastal restaurants from Udupi up to Uttara Kannada.

Neer dosa. Water dosa: a thin rice crepe from an unfermented batter, from further down this coast in Tulu Nadu, eaten with fish curry or coconut chutney.

Udupi meals and dosa. The temple town's vegetarian kitchen comes from Udupi, down the coast, home of the masala dosa: idli, dosa, upma, and a full meal on a leaf.

Mangalore buns. Soft, mildly sweet puris of flour and banana, fried and eaten with coconut chutney and sambhar, or plain.

Gadbad.

The coast's ice cream in a tall glass: several flavours with jelly, fruit, nuts and syrup. First made in a hurry in Udupi; 'gadbad' means just that.

Kokum sherbet and sol kadhi. Kokum, the Western Ghats' sour purple fruit: a bright-red sherbet for summer, sol kadhi with coconut milk after a fish meal, the dried rind in the curry instead of tamarind.

Cashew. The trek runs through cashew groves: a red or yellow cashew apple, sweet and sharp, with the nut hanging below it in its shell.

Tender coconut. The beaches' water bottle: fresh coconuts in town and on the sand, all along the coast.

Banana pancakes. The beach cafés' breakfast, with masala chai, before the walk.

Got a day to spare?

27 Mirjan Fort.

About 21 km away from the Aghanashini: a laterite fort with double walls, a moat and interlinked wells, said to be the Pepper Queen's. Mossy and green after the rains.

25 Yana.

Two towers of black karst, 120 and 90 m tall, in the forest about 50 km east, made a geo-heritage site by the Geological Survey of India in 2026. A short forest walk from the road.

Vibhoothi falls. Near Yana, a fall named after the limestone it runs past. A short walk in from the road; best in and just after the monsoon.

29 Kunta, half an hour on.

From Gokarna, Kunta is about half an hour south: quiet beaches edged with rocks, cashew shops in town, and Zostel Homes Kunta by the Badagani river.

28 Nirvana beach.

Past the Aghanashini's mouth, reached through Kunta or by ferry: a long, calm stretch of sand with hardly a shack.

31 Murudeshwar.

About 80 km south, a seaside temple town with the world's third-tallest statue of Shiva, 37 m high and seen from far down the coast.

Karwar. About 60 km north: the Kali's mouth, Sadashivgad fort and a warship you can walk through. Tagore stayed here in 1882 and wrote about it.

Sirsi. Inland in the Ghats, past Kunta: a forest town of area gardens, the Marikamba temple of 1688 and waterfalls round about.

28 Kagal fort.

On the hill between Nirvana and the Aghanashini's mouth, a few bits of old fort wall, and a view of beaches and river.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

1 Maha Shivaratri and the chariot.

In February or March the town fills for its biggest festival, and the great wooden chariot is pulled down Car Street from the Mahaganapati temple to the beat of drums. Book well ahead.

6 Kartika Purnima.

The full moon of Kartika, in October or November, is a major event at the temple too.

Suggi, round Holi. From the rice harvest to Holi, Suggi dancers in headresses go from village to village along this coast, thanking the year for its crop.

25 Yana's ten days.

Inland at Yana, Shivaratri runs for ten days under the black rocks.

The Suggi's headgear. Suggi dancers wear ornamented headgear and dance with long decorated sticks, a harvest dance kept by the coast's Halakki Vokkaligas.

Between two rivers

The Gangavali.

Comes down from the Western Ghats, falling 183 m at Magod on the way, and meets the sea at the north end of the main beach.

The Aghanashini. One of the few rivers in the Ghats with no dam on it, reaching the sea south of the beaches.

Mangroves and mudflats. Its estuary holds mangroves, about 80 kinds of fish and nine of edible shellfish; at low tide, women gather clams and mussels on the flats.

26 Tadadi's boats.

At the river's mouth, Tadadi's fishing harbour lands the coast's catch.

Shaped like an ear? Our own page says the two river mouths and the coast between them draw a cow's ear, like the town's name. Coincidence, probably.

A wetland of world importance.

The Aghanashini's estuary is on the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance: mudflats, mangroves and some 55,000 birds.

Rice that takes the salt. On the estuary's tidal fields farmers grow kagga, a rice that tolerates salt; after the harvest, the same fields raise prawns.

Kites, dolphins and creepers

Brahmany kites. Chestnut wings, a white head, hanging on the breeze over the headlands.

Dolphins. Fins in the bays on calm mornings; watch from the path.

Turtles and crabs. The shore and its waters are home to olive ridley turtles, crabs, groupers and parrotfish.

6 Bonnet macaques. Round the temples, watching your bag. Don't feed them.

16 Cashew trees. They line the trek; red and yellow cashew apples hang from them from February to April.

22 Cows on the sand. They doze on the beaches and in the shade of the path. Walk round them.

Black-headed ibis. On the estuary's mudflats: almost a tenth of the region's black-headed ibis, by the Ramsar count.

29 Turtles, from Kunta.

From Gokarna, Kunta's beaches are where olive ridley turtles come ashore to nest in winter; forest staff guard the eggs.

14 Waves that glow.

Nights around the monsoon, travellers see plankton glow blue in the breaking waves; never promised, best on a dark night.

Only in Gokarna

14 Half Moon, then Full Moon.

Paradise beach has a second name, Full Moon, so the trek goes from a half moon to a full one.

A beach called Small Hell. A small cove off the cliff path south of Om, reached only on foot or by boat, and nothing like its name.

22 One faces west. Kudle is the beach for sunsets: Om, Half Moon and Paradise all face south.

5 Ganapati first. The town goes to the Mahaganapati temple before the Mahabaleshwar, and the chariot starts from it too.

In a poem for 1,600 years. Kalidasa put Gokarna in the Raghuvamsha in the 4th century.

15 Stars, no wires. Most of Half Moon's shacks have no electricity, so the night sky comes with no lights in the way.

Manuscripts in the family.

Three of the town's priestly families keep their own Vedic manuscripts; since 2014 a digital library has put over 230 online.

Salt, catch and kokum: the coast's own

Tadadi's harbour.

A fishing harbour and a fish-processing plant

Gokarna

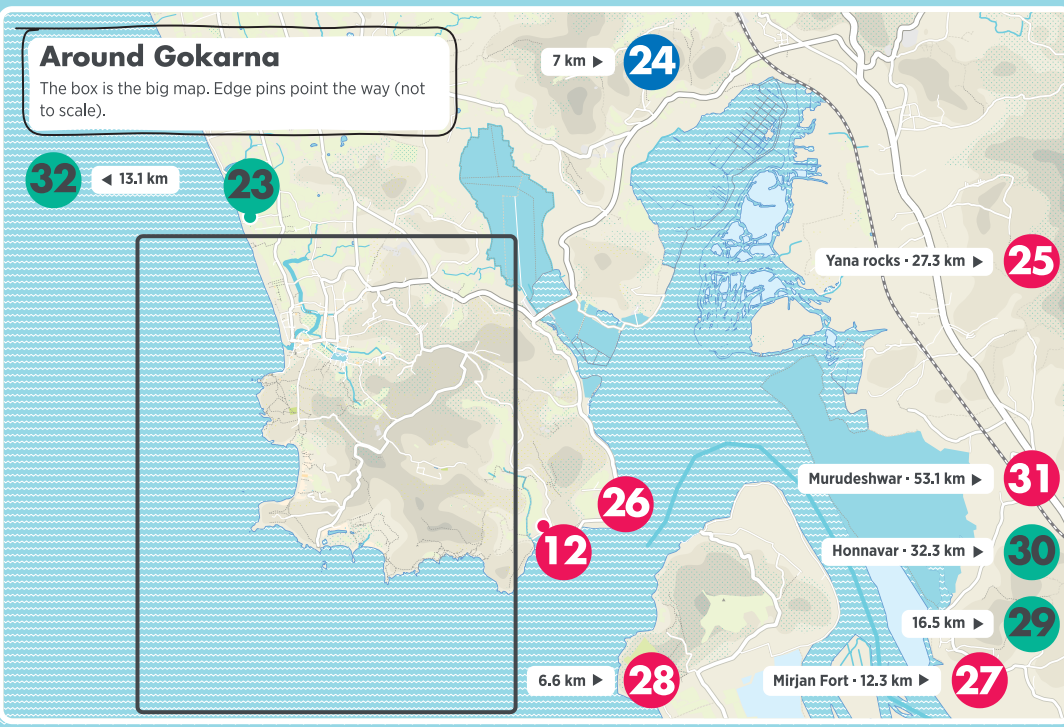
Every number is a tip around the map, in its colour. Every star is a quest.

- Two Gokarnas
- Beach, Headland, Beach
- Meenu Oota, Please
- Malas and Cashews
- Chariots and Cashew Groves
- One More Sunset at Kudle
- our Zostel
- Zo Selections Gokarna
- a quest (the list is round the map)
- The beach trek, the walk (side A)
- circled: don't miss it
- a dot: its true place, where a number stands aside
- a drawing by a number: what is there
- water
- the hills
- bare rock
- orchards
- salt pans
- grassland



- ## QUESTS
- Dares for the brave and the curious. The map marks each with a star; tick them off as you go.
- 22 Watch the sun go into the sea from Kudle. Kudle faces west; Om, Half Moon and Paradise face south. Sit on the rocks at its southern end and stay for the last of the light.
 - 14 Walk Kudle to Paradise, then take a boat back. Four beaches, three headlands, one path. Start early, swim where it's calm, and wave down a shared boat for the ride home.
 - 15 Count the painted arrows from Om to Half Moon. Red and white arrows on the rocks mark the way over the headland. Lose count and you've probably lost the path too.
 - 18 Frame both of Om's crescents in one shot. Climb the path above the beach until the two bays, split by a rocky point, fit in the frame together.
 - 23 Spot a dolphin from the headland path. Calm mornings are the time, off Om and Belek. Stop on the path, watch the sea, and wait for a fin.

- 3 Find out which chariot is the dodda ratha. Gokarna has two chariots, the small sanna ratha and the big dodda ratha, which rolls down Car Street at Shivaratri. Dodda means big.
- 3 Earn a dhanyavada, Kannada keeps its thank-yous for real kindness, not for change at the counter. Notice when one is meant.
- 4 Walk all the way round Kottiteertha. Small shrines and old houses ring the tank. Count the shrines as you go, and keep to the bank.
- 26 Eat the day's catch, fried, curried or roasted. Pomfret, kingfish and seer are the usual three. Have it with rice for a proper oota, or with neer dosa.
- 3 Drink something the colour of kokum. The coast's sour red fruit goes into curries and a cold sherbet. Ask for it on a hot afternoon.
- 16 Find a cashew apple on the trek. From February to April the cashew trees along the path hang red and yellow fruit, each with its grey nut underneath.
- 14 Find a leaf shaped like a goat's hoofprint. Goat's-foot creeper trails over the top of the sand, pink trumpets and two-lobed leaves. Look, don't pick.



- ## REACHING US
- On the cliff above the main beach. Zostel Gokarna. On the cliff over the main beach, on Kudle Beach Road: a sea-view cafe, dorms and cottages, and the beach trek starting at the door. The main beach is a five-minute hike down. Drop your bag and let the crew mark this sheet.
 - Live the Art of Escape. Zo Selections Gokarna. By Zostel, on Om Beach Road, a seven-minute drive from Om Beach. A boutique resort in lush greenery, an open-air pool, private cottages, balcony dorms and an in-house restaurant. Come with your people, and let the days slow down.
- ## TWO GOKARNAS
- 3 A main street as wide as a chariot. Car Street (Rathabeddi). Gokarna's main market street, wide because the Shivaratri chariot is pulled along it: low houses with red clay-tile roofs and painted walls, shops selling dhots, temples between them. Walk it slowly in the morning; look up at the houses.

10 A hilltop temple with sea on three sides
Ramathirtha and the cliff path. Steps climb from the main beach's south end to a small Rama temple by a spring, on a hill with the sea on three sides: the first leg of the walk to Kudle, half an hour over the top. Keep well back from the edge.

18 Two crescent bays joined at a rocky point
Om Beach. Two crescent bays meeting at a rocky point, the busiest cove, with a road down to it. The first bay has the cafes and jet skis, the second the quiet. Calm enough to swim near the shore by day, in season.

28 The long, empty beach across the river
Nirvana Beach. Across the Aghanashini's mouth from Tadadi: a long, wide, nearly empty beach with a handful of shacks, by ferry across the river or by road through Kumta. Walk the tideline at sunset; swim only well away from the river mouth.

17 Walk out, ride back
The boats between the beaches. Small motorboats shuttle between the coves, so the trek is walked only one way. In season they run shared and leave when full. Om and Paradise are the pick-up points. Agree the ride first, wear the life jacket, and go before sunset.

11 Walk it, surf it, never swim it
Gokarna Beach (the main beach). The long town beach, right at the temple's door, where pilgrims, families and surf classes meet. Zostel Gokarna is on the cliff at its south end. Don't swim: the currents are strong and drownings happen. Paddle, and listen to the lifeguards.

22 The first cove: hammocks, palms, slow days
Kudle Beach. The first cove over the headland and the backpackers' favourite: palms, cafes with ham-mock-filled verandahs, cheap food, the odd music jam at dusk. A beach you can swim at in the daytime, but ask the lifeguards first. Boats run on to Om.

31 A temple on a hill in the sea
Murudeshwar. Eighty kilometres south: a temple on Kinduka hill with the sea on three sides, under a 20-storey gopura and a 37-metre statue of Shiva. A day trip by road or the Konkan line. Dress modestly; check the day's timings at the gate.

23 Humpback dolphins, early and quiet
Dolphins offshore. Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins feed off this coast. Look for them early, on a calm sea, from a boat out of Om or the rocks at Belek. Likely, never promised. Pick a slow boat that keeps its distance, never one that chases.

12 The quiet way in from the south
Belek Beach. Past Paradise, towards the Aghanashini: a rocky, quiet beach most visitors never reach, by road or by boat. Start the trek here and walk the coast north to Om. Calm in the early morning; watch for dolphins.

25 Two black rocks in the forest
Yana rocks. Fifty kilometres east, in the forest: two black limestone outcrops, Bhairaveshwara Shikhar (about 120 m) and Mohini Shikhar (about 90 m). A short forest walk and some 260 steps to their foot. Keep it quiet.

29 Half an hour south, a slower coast
Kumta (Zostel Homes Kumta). Half an hour away: an easy-going coastal town with quiet rocky beaches, Dhareshwara and Alveki among them, sunsets over the Badagani river and local cashew shops. Zostel Homes Kumta, among coconut groves, is a calm base for the coast.

30 Mangrove boardwalks at the Sharavathi's mouth
Honnavar. Where the Sharavathi meets the sea, south of Kumta: a boardwalk through the mangroves, backwater boats, Asparakonda falls, the Eco Beach. An old port Ben Battula visited in 1342; the Konkan Railway's longest bridge crosses here.

14 The end of the trail, rocks and all
Paradise Beach (Full Moon Beach). The last cove of the trek, about an hour from Om past tiny Small Hill Beach: rocks, pockets of sand, forest behind, a shack or two, no toilets. Carry everything in and out. Strong waves and sharp rocks: stay in the shallows. Boat back.

26 A working port where mackerel dries
Tadadi port. A small working fishing port at the Aghanashini's mouth: boats, nets and, in season, mackerel drying in the sun. The ferry to Aghanashini village and Nirvana Beach goes from here. Step round the nets; ask before taking photos.

8 Beginner waves, all dry season
Surfing on the main beach. Steady, gentle waves made for beginners, best at the north and towards the Gangavali. Surf schools line the beach; the season is November to March. Take a lesson before you rent a board, and stay where the instructors can see you.

32 Mangoes, cashews and the better trains
Ankola. Across the Gangavali, about twenty kilometres north: a small town known for its own mango, the Kari khed, and its cashews. Its station gets the main trains between Mangalore, Bangalore and Goa; a taxi does the last stretch.

15 A shack or two, a lot of quiet
Half Moon Beach. Twenty minutes over the forested headland from Om: a small crescent between sea and woods, a shack or two in season, no road, no jet skis. The sea is lovely and a little risky; swim close in, if at all. Stay a night in a hut for the stars.

27 A laterite fort linked to the Pepper Queen
Mirjan Fort. A 45-minute drive away on the Aghanashini: a laterite fort with high walls, hidden passageways and moss-covered ruins, linked to Chennabhairadevi, the 16th-century Pepper Queen. Greenest in the monsoon. Climb the ramparts carefully.

9 Facing west, the evening's best seat
Kudle's sunset. Kudle faces due west, so this is where the coast watches the sun go into the sea. Sit on the sand or low rocks, well back from the waves, and stay on as the cafes light up and a jam starts. Torch for the walk back.

MEENU OOTA, PLEASE

- 13 Pineapple at the end of the trail. Paradise Beach's shacks. The trek's last beach, about an hour from Om. In season a few shacks may sell pineapple, water and sweets. Bring your own supplies, eat pineapple on the sand, boat back.
- 19 Om Beach's best-known table. Namaste Cafe. On the sand at Om Beach, Zostel's iconic cafe: prawn masala, kingfish sizzler or fried bang-gude (mackerel); banana pancakes and masala chai in the morning. Come after a swim, stay for sunset.
- 21 Kudle's front row for the sun. Sunset Cafe, Kudle. On Kudle, a short walk from our hostel, a cafe that lives up to its name: grilled fish, rice pudding, chocolate pancakes, cold coffee, the sun sinking into the sea. Come early; it fills up.

CHARIOTS AND CASHW GROVES

- 1 A wooden chariot down Car Street. The Rathotsava at Shivaratri. Gokarna's biggest festival. Shivaratri, falls in February or March. On the chariot day a tall wooden chariot is pulled by hand down Car Street from the Mahaganapati temple behind the drums. Book early; watch from a side lane.
- 16 The trail's trees, both of them useful. The cashew and the coconut. The trek runs through cashew groves: in spring, red and yellow cashew apples with the grey nut hanging below; Ankola's cashews are well known. Coconut palms line Kudle and Om. Leave the cashews on the trees: the groves belong to someone.
- 20 Morning practice above the coves. Yoga by the sea. Gokarna's mornings: yoga centres and retreats behind Om and Kudle and on the cliffs above them, classes and courses from a few days to weeks, practice on the sand before the heat. Ask locally what's running in season.

ONE MORE SUNSET AT KUDLE

- 2 Where the buses from everywhere stop. Gokarna bus stand. In the town, about a kilometre from Zostel Gokarna: buses from Bangalore, Goa, Hubli, Mangalore and Pune. Overnight private buses each have their own drop point: check yours. An auto-rickshaw takes you on; agree the fare first.
- 24 Ten kilometres out, and few trains. Gokarna Road station. On the Konkan line about ten kilometres inland, with only a few trains: some from Mumbai, Bangalore and Margao. Ankola and Kumta are better connected. A taxi or auto-rickshaw does the last stretch; agree the fare first.

- 4 A tank so big it's called a lake. Kottiteertha. The largest of Gokarna's tanks, south-east of the Mahabaleshwar temple, ringed by houses, small temples and stone steps: the heart of the old town and a working space, not a showpiece. Walk the lane round it; ask before photographing anyone.
- 5 Forty steps away, where the chariot starts. Mahaganapati temple. Forty steps from the Mahabaleshwar temple, at the end of Car Street: the temple to Ganesha, who the town's story says set down Ravana's stone. Many visitors come here first. The Shivaratri chariot sets off from its door.
- 6 The temple the whole town grew round. Mahabaleshwar temple. The granite temple the town grew round, said to be first built under the Kadamba kings in the 4th century, by the entrance of town, about a kilometre before the temple streets. Its door faces away from the road: walk round the back. Fridays are busy. Shoes off, dress modestly.
- 7 The temple at the town's front door. Bhadrakali temple. An old temple to the goddess, dedicated to Uma (Parvati), right at the entrance of town, about a kilometre before the temple streets. Its door faces away from the road: walk round the back. Fridays are busy. Shoes off, dress modestly.