

Goa:

Indian and tourist culture at its best

>Goa - Motaz Othman

There is no surprise if the state of Goa in India attracts 2.5 million tourists a year. The reason is its natural beauty: 90% of its area is covered with permanently green trees and criss-crossed by eleven rivers, the longest being the Mandovi, with its clean golden-sand beaches. The most beautiful is Miramar beach.

Most important in Goa is the refined cultured conduct of its inhabitants in receiving their foreign visitors, marked by a high level of professionalism. The state and its 1,300,000 people, half of them Christians, rely almost exclusively on tourism. The Portuguese, then the British colonised the province, which led to a mix of local residents and foreigners for centuries.

The capital Bonji is a shopping paradise where the locals and foreigners can rub shoulders. Every Friday, rural villages offer their agricultural products and handicrafts for sale. It is also home to churches which are included in the World Heritage list, the most important being the basilica, where St. Francis is buried, and the

Saint's Cathedral, which is considered the largest church in the east.

The tourist season in Goa lasts, from October to May, when the average temperature is around 25 degrees. Each week, more than 40 charter flights arrive from Europe. This is followed by the monsoon season characterized by high rainfall - up to 2.5 meters. This provides a significant amount of water, feeding rivers and preserving the green vegetation. It's also the time for domestic tourism, where Indian citizens enjoy highly competitive prices.

Goa celebrates many cultural, religious and music festivals. You can practise recreational activities: fishing in the rivers, cruising in boats, discovering and contemplating the scenic waterfalls, mountains and dense forests. Similarly, the Arab Sea, on which the state of

Goa is situated, offers a rich marine life and of course, dolphins.

One of the best areas to visit is the spice farm, which produces hundreds of varieties of herbs to cure certain diseases, with the supervision of individuals with expertise and experience of hundreds of years.

A variety of accommodation is available ranging from 15 of five star hotels, beside private flats with swimming pools. You can also reside in floating boats which is a unique experience!

Mr. Anthony Pereira, Director of Alpha Holidays in Goa, confirmed that Emirates will establish a direct flight from Dubai to Goa, to facilitate the travel of Arab tourists.

The state of Goa always welcomes guests with professionalism. It has developed the culture of tourism to a very high level. ■

