



Goa's breathtaking landscapes are drawing many shutterbugs

Trigger happy

It's not only tourists who make a beeline to Goa. The tiny state is also becoming very popular with serious photographers.

By **Chryselle D'Silva Dias**

It is 1.30 am on a recent Tuesday morning in Goa. Photographer Prasad Pankar is on a night out with Luis Mascarenhas, a former student of Pankar's CMYK Photography Academy. The talk is about photography, cameras and everything in between. As the clock inches forward into the night, Pankar suddenly proposes a night photo-walk.

The enthusiasm is infectious and before you can say 'cheese', a Facebook update has gone out to the CMYK group inviting the awake to come along. By 3 am, there are seven young men gathered at Old Goa, the meeting point. They have with them their cameras, tripods and wide-awake grins. It's time to go on an exciting shooting spree.

Blame it on the breathtaking scenery and Latin colour that dots this tiny state. In recent years, Goa has become a leading destination for photography enthusiasts. Photography schools have mushroomed across the state, organised photo-tours cater to the camera-friendly traveller and even the Kala Academy (Goa's local arts centre) hosts free workshops conducted by leading national photographers for photo-enthusiasts.

Pankar is a good example of how Goa is nurturing the amateur photographer into turning professional. "I was interested in photography even as a child," he says. His parents, however, gave him everything except a camera. That longing to shoot was like a

"dormant volcano", one that erupted when he took a course at Stenodac, under the able hands of Vijay Naik and Alirio Saldanha. Pankar's experiments with a point and shoot camera received compliments and advice on going pro. He received his first 'proper' camera as a wedding gift from his wife. "I found my true calling then," he says.

Pankar quit his bank job in 2003 and steadily built a career out of his images. Assignments with *Femina* and *Gladrags* were the highlights of his early days. Today, his portfolio includes fashion, product and resort photography. Pankar started the CMYK Academy to fill in a void left by the departure of Saldanha to New Zealand. Several years later, over 700 students have completed the basic and advanced courses offered by his academy. Several have also gone pro, a fact that Pankar is justifiably proud of.

Archana Nagvekar is one such student. A computer engineer by day, Nagvekar completed her course at CMYK in 2008 but has been shooting with her digital SLR even before that. "The formal training taught me the basics of the SLR camera, i.e., the science behind it," she says and goes on to quote Pankar who tells his students: "The art is already there inside you." Nagvekar's close-up of a hibiscus flower was published on the National Geographic website.



The photo is unusual since the unopened petals of the flower formed a heart shape. “The publication meant a lot,” she remembers. “It was very motivating and humbling,” she says. Her interest in photography and the accolades her images were receiving prompted her to have a solo exhibition in May 2010 called ‘Shades of Grey’. The black and white images of her travels were exhibited at the Kala Academy, Panjim. The response from the press and visitors alike was enthusiastic and has prompted her to think about future exhibitions.

While Pankar’s free photo-walks and monthly meetings are only for CMYK students, other groups organise events that are open to all. The Kala Academy, for example, held a photo workshop with photographer Shirish Karale. The workshop was free and ran the whole gamut of fashion-product-outdoor photography. Goan

Shutterbugs is another group that organises free and regular photo-walks all around Goa and their Facebook page is a good place to get acquainted with. The walks are often led by an experienced guide, local historian or custodian of a heritage property – either a house or a museum. The photos are then uploaded to their Flickr account – a simple way for the photographers and the public to see all the images and comment on them.

If you’re looking for some serious photography training while also vacationing in Goa, a more organised photo-tour might be what you need. GoGoa Holidays offers a guided photography tour spread over five days and is led by an experienced photographer. The tour cost – currently £495 (Rs 35,000) to £595 (Rs 42,000) – includes stay, some meals and transport in Goa. “We take our guests to places

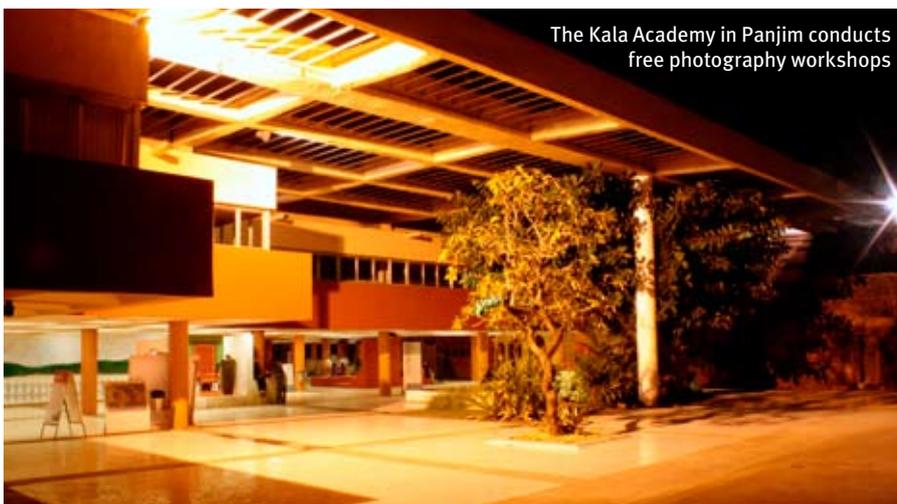


Madhu Reddy and (above) one of her stunning takes

that regular tourists don’t get to go to,” says Beryl Nasse, local co-ordinator for GoGoa. These include heritage houses in Quepem, wildlife sanctuaries, a guided Panjim walk and a visit to a spice farm that is not on the tourist trail. With only 10 places in each tour, personal attention is assured.

Intrepid traveller and US-returned, now-Hyderabad based photographer Madhu Reddy recently attended a Black and White Film Photography Workshop conducted by GoCAP (Centre for Alternative Photography). The workshop explored the technical aspects of darkroom techniques, printmaking, toning and archival presentation. Participants also learned how to compose a strong B&W image, which can be a little difficult when you are seeing in Eastman colour.

Based in Calangute, in the thick of the beach belt, CAP aims to promote alternative photography art in India. Fine Art photographer Edson Dias recounts how CAP came about. “I work independently on different photographic techniques including pinhole photography,” he says. Last year, he met three other photographers doing similar work, each on their own. Meeting photographers with similar interests led to the desire to create a space to share ideas, explore new methods and interact with other photographers. CAP officially began in January 2010 and has since hosted several workshops including one on pinhole photography.



The Kala Academy in Panjim conducts free photography workshops

Pranav Lal, one of the participants at the Pinhole Photography workshop at CAP enjoyed the experience of learning to use the matchbox cameras. One of the two blind participants at the workshop, Lal used vOICE (a program that perceives images via sound) to see what the photographer was considering while deciding the scene. "It exposed me to new techniques and to professional photographers so I was able to ask them a lot of questions," he says.

Reddy compared her film photography workshop experience to that of making food from scratch as opposed to eating processed food. Developing film is a slow process and while she may not be ready to give up her DSLR yet, the workshop offered her an opportunity for learning and strengthening the basics.

In addition to its workshops, CAP has a darkroom for black and white photography development and printing process experimentation which can be used by interested photographers for a fee. "I like to make things with my own hands," says Edson.

The future is bright for photography in Goa. New schools are starting up. Pankar's CMYK opens new branches in Panjim, Margao, Ponda and Vasco. Enquires from Bengaluru and Mumbai are leading him to consider workshops in those cities as well. "I am glad new schools are opening up," he says when asked about the trend (and possible competition). "I want to make Goa a hub for photography, so this is a good thing", he adds.



SECRETS OF THE PROS

Where the experienced shutterbugs shoot in Goa – and why

Goa has a picture-postcard view almost everywhere you turn. Whether you have a simple point and shoot camera or a fancy SLR with multiple lenses, Goa's beauty is easy to capture in every season. Experienced photographers, though, always have a few favourite

(sometimes secret) places to shoot.

- For Prasad Pankar, the scenic beauty of little fishing villages like Betal is incomparable. "I could spend all day there," he says. The beautiful houses of Chandor are another favourite for him. Early mornings and late evenings (an hour before sunset) are his preferred times to shoot.
- Both Archana Nagvekar and Madhu Reddy like the colour of

Goa's markets. Reddy enjoys walking through the bustling Mapusa market. "Go early when the light is good, before 10 am," she recommends.

- Nagvekar suggests experimenting with angles. "A top view or low shot can at times make a mundane item more exciting," she says. Reddy recommends you keep your camera aside and just get a feel of the place before shooting.

GO QUIZ

GIANT OF A MOVIE

India's most magnificent film completes 35 years. How much do you know about *Sholay*?

<p>❶ What was <i>Sholay</i> originally going to be called?</p> <p>[a] Thakur Ka Badla [b] Angaarey [c] Do Dost</p>	<p>❷ The film was premiered at...</p> <p>[a] Minerva theatre, Bombay [b] Metro cinema, Calcutta [c] Urvashi Cinema, Bengaluru</p>	<p>❸ Who was first offered the role of Gabbar Singh?</p> <p>[a] Pran [b] Mac Mohan [c] Danny Denzongpa</p>	<p>❹ Most offices were shut the day the film released because...</p> <p>[a] It was released on a weekend [b] It was 15 August [c] It was a bank holiday</p>	<p>❺ During the making of <i>Sholay</i>, Amitabh Bachchan was simultaneously shooting for which film?</p> <p>[a] Faraar [b] Mili [c] Deewar</p>
<p>❻ Who was originally slated to play Amitabh Bachchan's role?</p> <p>[a] Rajesh Khanna [b] Shatrughan Sinha [c] Navin Nischol</p>	<p>❼ <i>Sholay</i> was the Indian film to be shot in 70 mm.</p> <p>[a] First [b] Second [c] Third</p>	<p>❽ How much were Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar who jointly wrote the film paid?</p> <p>[a] Rs 40,000 [b] Rs 3.75 lakh [c] Rs 1.5 lakh</p>	<p>❾ Which director did Salim-Javed first take the <i>Sholay</i> script to?</p> <p>[a] Prakash Mehra [b] Pramod Chakravarty [c] Manmohan Desai</p>	<p>❿ Name the famous English song that <i>Mehbooba mehbooba</i> was copied from?</p> <p>[a] Say You Love Me [b] Cotton Fields [c] Una Paloma Blanca</p>

ANS: 1-B, 2-A, 3-C, 4-B, 5-C, 6-B, 7-A, 8-C, 9-C, 10-A

