

Coastal Bliss

DISCOVERING MAHARASHTRA'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

If India's Goa has already charmed you, Coco Shambhala invites you further along the Konkan coast—to a corner of Sindhudurg where luxury feels intimate, and nature remains untouched.

by SHIKHA SHAH / *Shikha Shah is a journalist based in India who writes about travel and lifestyle. Her work has appeared in Condé Nast Traveller and Travel + Leisure.*

photo COCO SHAMBHALA

When it comes to coastal luxury escapes in India, Goa — with its golden beaches, vibrant social scene and lingering Portuguese heritage—has long been the poster child for sun-soaked indulgence. However, just beyond its well-trodden sands, another shoreline reveals a quieter narrative.

Roughly 100–120 kilometres south of Goa's Dabolim Airport, along Maharashtra's Konkan coasts, rests Sindhudurg, the tropical jewel of the Malvan region. Here, long ribbons of soft sand meet clear Arabian Sea waters, fringed by swaying palms and backed by verdant hinterlands. Scattered sea forts whisper stories of the Maratha past, while kitchens brim with the aromas of fresh seafood and fiery Malvani spices. Homestays and a handful of thoughtfully designed resorts blend seamlessly into the landscape, offering travellers space, stillness and an intimacy with nature that is increasingly rare along most popular shores.

Understated and still largely under the radar, Sindhudurg delivers a kind of luxury defined not by spectacle, but by serenity — where every experience feels more personal, as though crafted just for you.

COCO SHAMBHALA — WHERE PRIVACY MEETS TROPICAL MODERNISM

Perched on a hill above Bhogwe Beach in Sindhudurg, about a 30-minute drive from the small town of Kudal, Coco Shambhala emerges like a secret hideaway cocooned within nature and long protected by the Konkan coast. Conceived by British architect and Indophile Giles Knapton, the eco-conscious boutique retreat reflects a deeply personal vision — a secluded haven where sustainability, craftsmanship, and understated elegance coexist seamlessly with the surrounding landscape.

A pathway of red laterite steps, scented by blooming frangipani and lined with towering palms, striking torch

ginger, and native flora such as hibiscus and kokum, winds toward four private villas discreetly nestled into the hillside. From these elevated perches, the shimmer of the Arabian Sea blends with the verdant canopy, creating a living canvas of forest and water.

Each two-bedroom residence is a sanctuary in its own right, complete with an infinity pool that gazes over lush greenery and the ravishing seascape. Interiors exude quiet sophistication: handcrafted furniture fashioned from coconut wood and reclaimed materials, soft grey and white linens, and block-printed textiles add gentle texture to restful bedrooms. The restrained, earthy palette allows the surrounding Konkan greenery to shape the visual experience.

Open-air pavilions dissolve the boundary between indoors and outdoors, inviting sea breeze and dappled sunlight, while reddish-brown Mangalore clay tiled roofs lend warmth and regional authenticity.

Unlike most conventional resorts, the villas at Coco Shambhala have no doors. Instead, a simple jute string allows guests to signal privacy when desired, while otherwise the villa remains open to attentive staff for cleaning and care. This openness fosters a rare sense of trust and intimacy, where the space feels lived-in rather than staged, and every corner exudes the warmth and comfort of a true home.

Sustainability is woven into every aspect of the property: local artisans were engaged and trained in both construction and hospitality, a labour of love that fosters community connections while preserving traditional skills.

Privacy isn't just a feature — it's the essence of Coco Shambhala. There is no formal reception; guests arrive directly at their villas, settling into spaces where time slows, silence deepens, and the outside world fades. Days unfold with a gentle rhythm. Morning coffee accompanies birdsong, ►





One of 4 villas with private pools.

afternoons are whiled away soaking in the private pools, and evenings descend in the hushed glow of coastal twilight. Encounters with other guests are rare, reinforcing the sense of a wholly exclusive escape suspended between hillside forest and open sea.

For discerning travellers drawn to mindful exploration, Coco Shambhala is an intimate dialogue between architecture and landscape, where every detail feels purposeful, and every moment remarkable.

BESPOKE CULINARY CREATIONS, SERVED WITH HEART

Coco Shambhala doesn't boast a formal restaurant; instead, barefoot staff bring perfectly curated meals directly to the dining area of your villa. Everything is served with love, warmth and precision. A bespoke menu is tailored to your preferences—before arrival, the team, led by manager Suhas and a dedicated group of chefs, connects with guests to understand tastes, dietary needs, and culinary whims. With the Arabian Sea shimmering just beyond the windows, each bite is a connection to Sindhudurg's land, sea, and culinary heritage.

Fresh, vibrant ingredients define the culinary experience. The resort's herb garden and microgreens provide the foundation, enhanced by produce sourced within a 50-kilometre radius. Culinary director Shagun Mehra elevates this local bounty with international flair, presenting signature creations ranging from Curry Leaf Sungta (butter- and curry-leaf-poached prawns) to Italian poke bowls, grilled chicken tacos, Asian-inspired salads, handmade pizzas, and delicate desserts such as Chili Chocolate Ganache and Serradura — a light, sawdust-style pudding.

At the heart of the menu is Malvani cuisine, steeped in centuries of coastal tradition. Spices brought by traders —

“Coco Shambhala is an intimate dialogue between architecture and landscape, where every detail feels purposeful, and every moment remarkable.”

cloves, cinnamon, and pepper — blend seamlessly with local staples like coconut and kokum, creating dishes that are aromatic, bold, and comforting. Signature specialties include Rawa-Fried Fish, where a golden semolina crust gives way to tender, juicy flesh; the rich, coconut-based Malvani Prawn Curry; Tambadi Bhaji, a vibrant stir-fry of red amaranth leaves with mustard seeds, garlic, green chillies, and freshly grated coconut; and the soul-soothing Varan Dal, a yellow lentil preparation tempered with ghee, mustard seeds, and curry leaves. No Malvani meal is complete without Solkadhi, a refreshing pink-hued digestif of kokum and coconut milk, delicately seasoned with garlic and green chilli.

Drinks at Coco Shambhala are equally considered. Curated cocktails feature seasonal, locally sourced ingredients and house-made spirits, perfect for sipping by the sea. Beer aficionados can enjoy selections from Pune-based Great State Aleworks, with options ranging from crisp Bajra Brut to tart Rhubarb Gose and tropical Guava variants.

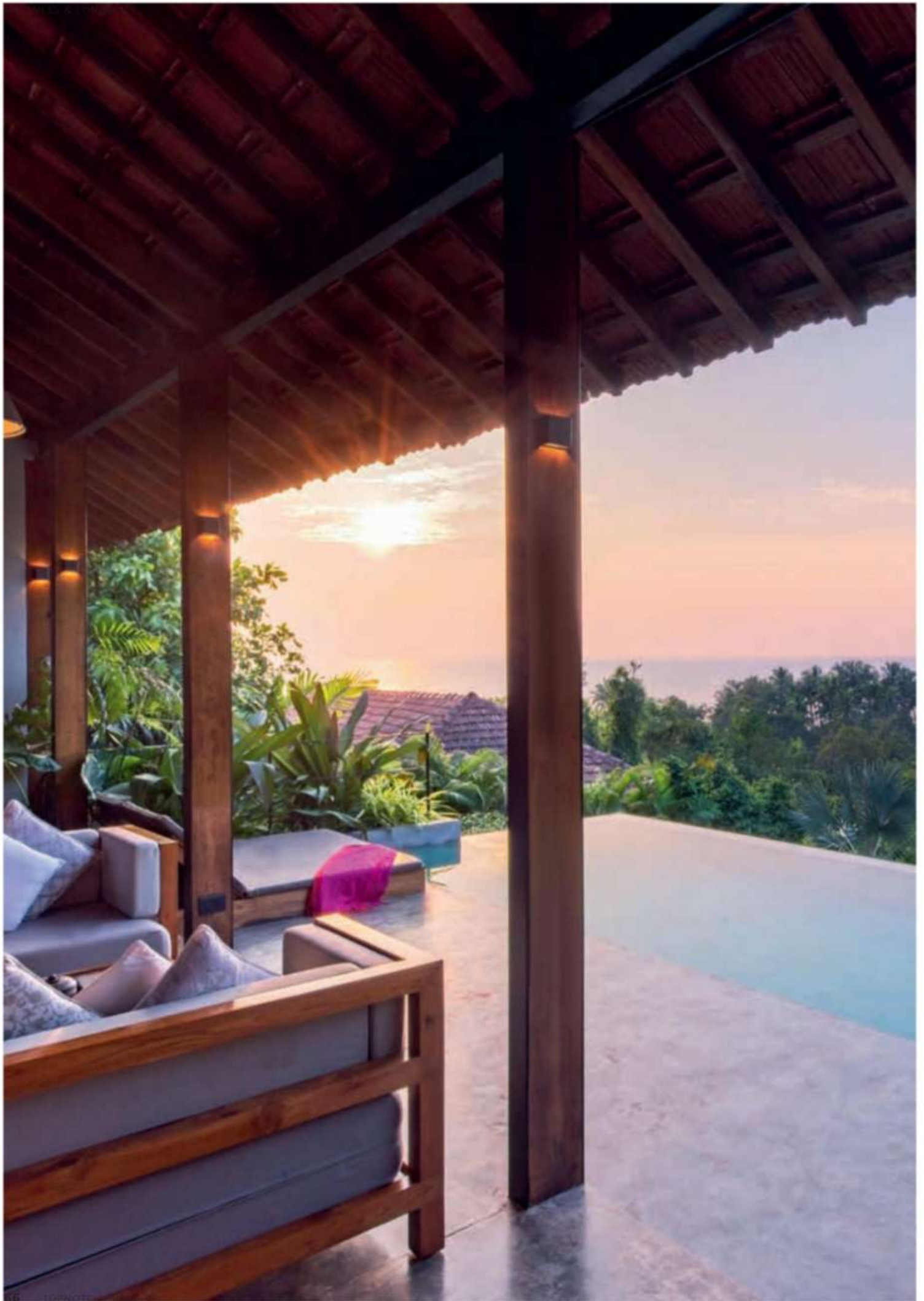
If you're seeking a multisensory experience, the property offers multiple dining venues: beside your villa's private, ocean-facing infinity pool, along the nearby beach, or within secluded corners of the estate, creating an immersive setting for every course.

WELLNESS AND ART, WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR VILLA

At Coco Shambhala, indulgence begins the moment you step into your villa—and often, it doesn't require leaving it. Every experience is thoughtfully designed to immerse guests in local culture, culinary mastery, and creative expression, all within the privacy of your own space.

A Malvani cooking class, for instance, transforms a pool-side corner of your villa into a vibrant mini-kitchen, where skilled chefs guide you through the secrets of coastal cuisine. ➤







Fresh fruit drink.



The spa at Coco Shambhala Sindhurg.

For those drawn to art, Chitrakathi storytelling and painting classes bring centuries-old tradition to your doorstep. Guided by Chetan Parshuram Gangavane, a third-generation master from nearby Pinguli village, you can explore this rare Thakar Adivasi (tribal) craft. Under the gentle patter of rain on terracotta roofs, guests paint intricate motifs of deities and animals on MDF boards or canvas, creating keepsakes that are as meaningful as they are beautiful. Pottery classes, guided by local artisan Babban Kumbhar, encourage guests to shape clay — by hand or on the wheel — either within the villa or in the resort's lush gardens.

A truly luxurious seaside escape finds its soul in the spa. At Coco Shambhala, treatments are intimate rituals, where centuries-old Ayurvedic traditions intertwine with the restorative allure of aromatherapy. In collaboration with luxury wellness brand Ayca, the resort has crafted a signature collection of paraben-free essential oils and botanical blends, each designed to awaken the senses. Whether enjoyed in the quietude of the spa suite or within your villa, every session restores balance, calms the mind, and leaves the spirit blissfully renewed.

BEYOND THE WALLS — DISCOVERING UNTOUCHED SINDHUDURG

Beyond the seclusion of your villa, Coco Shambhala offers a gateway to the scenic and historic treasures of Sindhurg. A short stroll or boat ride leads to the pristine shores of Bhogwe Beach and Nivati Beach, where calm waters, dramatic cliffs, and uninterrupted sunsets set the stage for beachside barbecues or intimate bonfires by the sea.

For those drawn to exploration, the rugged charm of Nivati Fort awaits, reached through the quiet lanes of Bhogwe. Home to around 1,500 residents, the village is framed by mango groves, clusters of coconut palms, and orchards of chikoo and breadfruit. Simple homes dot the landscape, and the rhythm of rural Konkan life unfolds gently—accompanied only by bird-

song or the occasional passerby along tranquil coastal roads.

Atop a small hill lie the weathered ruins of Nivati Fort, believed to have been built in the 18th century by the revered Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji. From this vantage point, sweeping views stretch across the Konkan coastline and the Arabian Sea beyond. The return journey to the resort follows a panoramic shoreline trail, where the sea glimmers endlessly on the horizon.

For an early start, guests can venture out at dawn on a dolphin-spotting excursion along the Konkan coast, returning just in time for a leisurely breakfast at the villa. Those seeking a deeper connection with the sea may join a traditional fishing trip, line-casting for Giant Perch, Barracuda, or Rock Cod before foraging along the coastline for edible seaweed and sea urchins. Back at the property, the resort's talented chefs transform the day's catch into a memorable feast, guiding guests through the preparation of dishes inspired by the bounty of the sea.

At Coco Shambhala, every excursion becomes more than an activity — it evolves into a personal story, one that lingers long after you leave the shores of Sindhurg. ★

Location Bhogwe Beach, Sindhurg district, Maharashtra, India

Setting Hillside hideaway overlooking the Konkan coast

Accommodation Four open-air villas designed for indoor-outdoor living

Getting there Around 30–40 minutes from Sindhurg Airport

Standout feature An intimate, highly personalised stay that opens the living spaces to nature

Best for Secluded beach escapes, slow luxury and design-led stays close to nature



DANIEL LINDQVIST

Based in Stockholm

Daniel is a Swedish-English translator and copy editor for the magazine. He holds a master's degree in Swedish and teaches Swedish, political science and philosophy at upper-secondary level.

"Understated luxury is the quiet experience of feeling seen without being disturbed, where thoughtful care shapes the atmosphere around you."



ANNE WETTER

Based in Stockholm, Sweden

Dr. Anne Wetter is a dermatologist, entrepreneur and lecturer specialising in dermatology, aesthetic medicine and long-term skin health. She is the founder and CEO of Inskinity, and co-founder of Diagnostiskt Centrum Hud, Sweden's leading dermatology provider.

"Clinical expertise, medicetical skincare and evidence-based methods that support long-term skin health"



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Shikha is a freelance travel journalist and illustrator. Her clients include BBC Travel, Condé Nast Traveller and Travel + Leisure. Her work focuses on food, culture, art and slow travel.

"As a petite Indian woman with relatively small feet, it's rare for hotel slippers and robes to fit me. When they are thoughtfully sized and comfortable, it stands out instantly."



JING ZHANG

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Jing is an editor, journalist and consultant working across fashion, luxury and travel. She is the founder of Luxe/Detour and the consultancy Altas Alter, and previously served as Global Editor-in-Chief of Jing Daily and Fashion Editor at the South China Morning Post.

"Understated luxury is something you feel instantly but cannot quite explain — design meant to be lived in, not just admired."

TOVE DALSRYD

Based in Asolo, Italy

Tove is a Beauty Editor and beauty expert at Plaza Kvinna, a women's fashion magazine, and has worked across the fashion and beauty industry for more than a decade. She spends most weekends discovering new destinations across Italy and Europe.

"The first thing I notice in a hotel room is the coffee situation. A good morning coffee instantly makes the whole day feel calmer."



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