



6hrs

8hrs

48hrs

10hrs

12hrs



24hrs

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ADC

pg 18 Check out what we love about Raymond Weil's Toccata collection

Afternoon Despatch & Courier

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BEACH BUM!

Forget about visiting Bali and Hawaii, this summer, explore a number of beautiful beaches without leaving the country. To help you plan your summer vacation, **Rhea Dhanbhoora & Dev Goswami** tell you about the top beach destinations across India



➤ Gokarna beach in Karnataka is frequented by devotees but is more than just a spiritual destination

Who doesn't love the beach? From the sun and sand, to clear blue skies and water sports, beaches are a great holiday destination for the entire family. Whether you want to soak up the sun (don't forget your sunscreen!) while your children play in the sand or indulge in some seaside activities, there's no reason to plan a holiday abroad, since India is home to several of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Before you plan your vacation this year, take a look at our recommendations for the top beach destinations from across the country.

VISAKHAPATNAM Andhra Pradesh

When you think of beaches, you will very rarely think of Andhra Pradesh as your go-to destination. However, the Visakhapatnam area is actually a great place to visit. Vishakhapatnam is also known as Vizag and one of the best beaches to visit there is Yarada beach. It's a little out of reach, but if you really want to get there, you can take one of the three road approaches and gain entrance through it from the private property that surrounds it. Because it's a private property, you can rest assured that it's going to be extremely clean and well-

maintained. The second-largest coastline in the country, it is barely 15km away from Visakhapatnam, but the pristine calm will make you feel like it's completely cut off from civilisation.

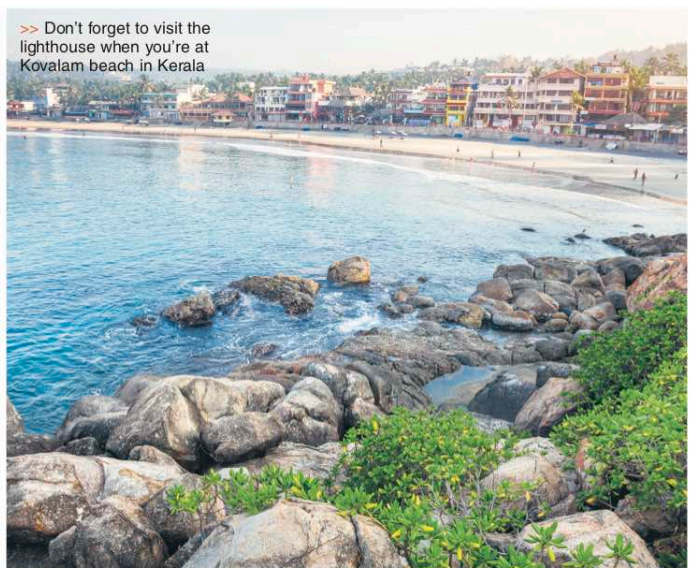
Getting there: This is probably one of the easiest destinations on the list to get to. Vizag is directly connected to Mumbai through both flights and the railway. So, all you need to do is pick your dates and book your tickets.

LIGHTHOUSE BEACH Kovalam, Kerala

Kovalam in Kerala is a must-see destination because it's dotted with several extremely beautiful beaches. They're clean, with long stretches of sand and gentle waves cascading along the shore. It's a tourist hot spot, but just because it's often buzzing with people doesn't mean you should write it off as a grotesquely populated spot. Make sure you visit the Lighthouse Beach, which is at the southernmost tip of the coastline. It's the most popular, for good reason. Not only are there several hotels and lodges you can stay at that are right on the beach, you can also visit the lighthouse. The view from the top is breathtaking!

Getting there: Just like Vizag, you can book direct flight or train tickets to Trivandrum,

➤ Don't forget to visit the lighthouse when you're at Kovalam beach in Kerala





>> Also visit the Elephant beach at Havelock Island in Andaman & Nicobar



>> With clear blue waters and extremely clean sands, Agatti in Lakshadweep is worth the trouble it takes to get there

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where Kovalam is located. Once you reach Trivandrum, you can book a taxi to take you to the beaches at Kovalam.

SERENITY BEACH
Pondicherry

Anyone who visits Pondicherry (or Puducherry as it's called) doesn't leave without visiting its spectacularly unspoiled beaches. With bluer than blue waters, soft white sands and palm trees that look like they've been plucked out of a film, this is a great beach destination. While Serenity Beach isn't as popular as the other beaches in and around the place, it's extremely peaceful and the perfect place to soak up a little of the culture because of the fishing village that surrounds it. It's also a popular surfing spot, but make sure you take a guide/surfing instructor with you since the sea can get quite choppy. It's a short stretch and not very touristy, but it's a great place to visit when you're in the area.

Getting there: There is no direct air connection to Pondicherry from Mumbai, though there is a train that you can board from Dadar. However, it will take you around 34-35 hours. If you don't want to spend so many hours travelling, you can catch a flight to Chennai (which is the closest airport) and then take a bus or book a taxi.

OM BEACH
Gokarna, Karnataka

Gokarna is a very popular pilgrimage spot, but it's not only the devout who will find peace here. There are several secluded beaches that make for scenic destinations, perfect for summer travel, that won't burn a hole in your wallet to get to. Located around 8km from the main town, it's absolutely breathtaking. The sand stretches for miles and there are several water sport activities, including surfing, water-skiing and parasailing that you can partake of when you're there.

Getting there: Trains and buses are the most direct way to reach Gokarna. But, if you'd like to go there by air, you'll have to take a flight to Dabolim in Goa, which is 140km from Gokarna. You can then take a taxi to reach Gokarna. The adventurous can also make a road-trip of the 735km by taking the Mumbai-Kochi highway.

PALOLEM
Goa

Of course, we weren't going to miss out on Goa! Off late, you'll hear several complaints about how the state has become over-saturated with travellers; but if you choose right, you can still have a memorable trip. If you don't want to miss out on all the fun and

parties that Goa is known for, but want to avoid the mess that Baga has become, head to Palolem. The beach is scenic and you will also be able to do all the touristy stuff. The best part about Palolem is that if you do get bored of the crowds, you can just walk over to the more isolated Coco Beach that is located nearby.

Getting there: Bus, train, air and road... Goa is connected very well to Mumbai. Once in Goa, you can take a taxi to reach Palolem, or you can board a bus going towards Canacona Bus Stand and get off there. From there, you can catch an auto-rickshaw to the beach.

KASHID
Near Alibaug, Maharashtra

Don't have more than a day on hand, but still want to escape the city? Head to Kashid, which is around 150km from Mumbai. Kashid Beach is so unexplored that you won't find too many accommodation or even eating options. So, it is best for a day trip; but if you do want a weekend or two-day trip you can stay and eat at Alibaug, which is around 35km away from Kashid. The beach itself is quite clean and deserted, making it a good option for a secluded destination.

Getting there: Kashid is just 150kms from Mumbai, so you can either drive down or take a ferry from Gateway of India to Alibaug and then take a taxi to Kashid.

VAGATOR
Goa

Beautiful, secluded, laid-back — these are adjectives that best describe Vagator Beach. Located next to the extremely famous tourist hotspot, Anjuna, Vagator will make

you see why Goa and beaches go hand-in-hand. The beautiful beach is cut off from the regular Goa crowd and when you go there, you shouldn't miss out on watching the sunset. The beach is perfect if all you want to do is relax with a group of friends or your family — but do not visit it during the chaotic New Year's week.

Getting there: Follow the same drill you would for Palolem. Reaching Vagator won't be a problem at all as its quite famous and so, connectivity is good.

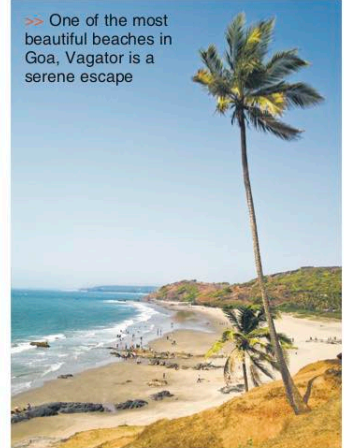
NAGOA
Diu

The quiet Nagoa beach in Diu is guaranteed to leave you feeling relaxed and happy. The horse-shoe shaped beach has a perfect balance between water-sports and the empty stretches of sand. You can take part in a number of adventure sports and at the same time get a sense of relaxation.

Getting there: The easiest way to reach Diu is by taking the only daily flight, operated by JetKonnnect. If you want to go by rail, you'll have to get off at Veraval and cover the 90kms to Diu by road.

AGATTI ISLAND
Lakshadweep

As far as destinations go, Lakshadweep is expensive and hard-to-reach (you need a special permit to visit the archipelago). But, it's too beautiful to let that stop you from visiting it! The beaches here rank among the best in the whole world, but if we were to choose one, it would have to be the 6km long Agatti Island. You can go for swim, try your hand at snorkeling and scuba-diving, or just loiter around on the pristine white sand while you take in the beauty of the green-blue



>> One of the most beautiful beaches in Goa, Vagator is a serene escape

beautiful waters. Beach lover or not, this is a destination you just have to visit.

Getting there: Lakshadweep is connected by air to Kochi in Kerala, which is connected to Mumbai by both rail and air. There are also ferries that connect Kochi and Lakshadweep. As far as the permit is concerned, the best way to go about it is to make enquiries at a hotel in Kochi or ask the hotel you'll be staying at in Lakshadweep to get it done for you.

RADHANAGAR BEACH
Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Havelock Island, that houses most of the popular beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is a big tourist hot spot, but it's also one of the prettiest places you'll ever visit. The beaches are often referred to by number, so remember that if someone asks you whether you want to visit beach number 7, your answer should be a resounding yes! Elephant Beach is also very pretty, so visit that on your way to or from the beach. Radhanagar beach was named the Best Beach in Asia by *Time* in 2004, so you don't want to skip this one.

Getting there: Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a destination that you should plan to visit in advance, paying attention to the minutest details. Sadly, there are no direct flights to the islands. You'll either have to change planes in Chennai or opt for flights with one stopover before they head to Port Blair. Once you're in Port Blair, you can take a ferry, seaplane or a helicopter — depending on your budget — which will take you to the Havelock Island. The official web portal (www.and.nic.in) lists the schedule and timings of the ferries and seaplane services.



>> Palolem beach lagoon in Goa is a great place to head to for an activity fuelled getaway