

mintPremium | **OPINION**

Goa needn't aspire to become the next Bali—but it should do more to live up to its potential

Piyush Doshi, Hemant Joshi | 4 min read | 17 Sep 2026, 04:29 PM IST



Goa need not become Bali or Phuket but it needs to stop squandering its natural advantages through lack of imagination or execution. **(Pexels)**

SUMMARY

Goa isn't far behind Bali in its natural appeal as a holiday destination but attracted less than one foreign visitor for every 13 Bali did in 2025. Four largely man-made problems stand in the way of Goa's success.

[Gift this article](#)[Check your wealth](#)[Home](#)[Markets](#)[Free Epaper](#)[Premium](#)[Get App](#)

On separate trips to Bali undertaken by each of us, we could not help comparing it to Goa—as blessed in terms of beachlines, forests, culture, cuisine and waterfalls as Bali is. Yet, our experience as tourists was markedly different.

In Bali, we could summon a Grab, know what it would cost and follow it on our phones. In Goa, with Uber and Ola kept out, finding a taxi meant either a semi-effective app or a negotiation over an exorbitant fare.

Waterfalls in Bali had well managed parking lots, ticket counters, paved access, railings, toilets, changing facilities and small cafés. None of these things cost a fortune, but together they turned a beautiful waterfall into a pleasant half-day excursion.

Goa's Dudhsagar falls were every bit as beautiful, perhaps more so. But the standout memory is of a backbreaking journey in a ramshackle vehicle on an apology of a road. Even an evening stroll was a hurdle race across unpaved shoulders and broken footpaths.

It is not that Bali could do this because it is richer. Goa's per capita income is almost twice that of Bali. The question is whether Goa cares enough about being a world-class tourist destination for high-paying tourists.

Also Read | India doesn't need more attractions. It needs a tourism system that works



In 2010, Goa drew about 440,000 foreign tourists; Bali drew 2.5 million. Since then, Bali's inflow has nearly tripled, and in 2025 set a record of about 7 million. Goa has added fewer than 80,000 foreign tourists in 15 years. Why has Goa fallen so far behind? Four largely man-made constraints stand out, and each has a fix.

Room shortage: Goa has about 69,000 registered hotel rooms, but only some 10,000 branded keys. Bali has around 60,000 classified hotel rooms, before counting its enormous villa and rental stock. Phuket is moving past 100,000.

Global tour operators can't build scale around a destination without inventory across price points. Branded supply is constrained by lack of clarity on what may be built where.

As of mid-2026, Goa is India's last coastal state without even a draft Coastal Zone Management Plan under the relevant 2019 notification. On top of that, investors face overlapping coastal, town-planning, panchayat and environmental approvals, an endless process before construction can legally begin.

Environmental protection must not weaken, but investors need certainty: hard no-build areas where ecological assets require them, developable areas marked out and time-bound approvals.

Goa should aid growth by identifying tourism zones away from sensitive beachfronts where an enlarged floor area ratio is exchanged for open space, sewage and drainage capacity and guaranteed public beach access, with a redevelopment policy for ageing prime land.

Also Read | Rx: aim for leadership of the fast-rising global market for medical tourism >

Weak air-links: Goa has two airports and ample runway capacity. In 2025, they together handled 1,784 scheduled international flights, bringing 236,000 foreign arrivals.

Charter flights, once the spine of the winter season, numbered 189 and carried only about 40,000, against over 1,000 such flights bringing roughly 250,000 visitors at their peak. This collapse accounts for most of Goa's missing foreign arrivals. In contrast, Bali and Phuket did not wait for air traffic to materialize; they bid for it with route-development incentives and co-funded destination marketing.

Goa built the infrastructure and assumed arrivals would follow. It should now buy the air back: a three-year route-development programme at its Mopa airport, with support tied to incremental international seats and sustained load factors, plus joint overseas marketing to attract charters while pursuing long-haul and hub connections that can support year-round arrivals.

Cab cringe: Goa has roughly 12,000 tourist taxis and a local taxi app does operate. What it lacks is a genuinely open, competitive ride-hailing market with the ubiquity, predictable pricing and ease of use that visitors now take for granted across much of Asia.

This is a regulatory and political problem, which means it can be fixed faster than others. Foster a competitive aggregator regime with transparent fares, while offering taxi owners attractive terms to join: guaranteed earnings through the transition, financing for vehicle upgrades and other incentives.

Also Read | Tourist or traveller? All-inclusive Bali has long charmed everyone >

An under-built public realm: The weakest part of Goa's tourism appeal may be what happens outside the hotel gate. There are very few good promenades, inconsistent footpaths and lighting, inadequate parking, uneven waste management, weak traffic

discipline and almost no walkable coastal edge. Bali's tourist strips may be congested, but large parts are both walkable and commercially vibrant.

The remedy is neither expensive nor complicated. Start with the 10 busiest beaches: promenades where appropriate, lighting, drainage, toilets, waste collection, pedestrian paths and peripheral parking linked by electric shuttle services. These are unglamorous investments with an outsized effect on visitor experience. Fund them transparently through a modest visitor levy, as Bali has introduced.

Goa need not become Bali or Phuket, and should not try. But it does need to stop being a destination with extraordinary natural advantages that squandered them through lack of imagination or execution.

The authors are, respectively, operating partner, The Convergence Foundation, and CEO, Atithi Foundation



[Gift this article](#)

[Check your wealth](#)

Topics

[#tourism ministry](#)

[#Hotels](#)

Meet the Author



[Piyush Doshi](#)

[Hemant Joshi](#)

Catch all the [Business News](#), [Market News](#), [Breaking News](#) Events and [Latest News](#) Updates [More](#)

Download the Mint app and read premium stories