



Cheshire Cat Gallery

The Changing Face of Assagao

A stone's throw away from the congested and bustling Mapusa, lies the reticent and captivating village of Assagao. The picturesque village is seeing a sudden influx of new residents, who are moving into the quaint town. The hotbed of new investments now has quaint cafes, yoga retreats, restaurants and boutiques springing up adding to its charm. Join us on a purposeful journey to discover the beautiful hamlet.

TEXT & PICS: ANUJA MAVINKURVE

ASSAGAO, a diminutive and pretty village in North Goa that rests peacefully in verdant hills, clothed in cashew groves, exudes an unhurried old-world charm. The village gets its name from the Asson trees that abound here. Gifted with the healing power of its organic spring waters, natural beauty and gentle soothing breezes from the Arabian Sea, the village has a laidback and serene air about it. Assagao has tacitly become a chic and upscale residential area of Goa, with many stately Portuguese restored homes with ravishing tropical gardens and flowers. Quaint cafes, restaurants, boutiques, yoga and Ayurveda retreats dot the countryside.

Assagao holds some stunning secrets up its sleeve. Unlike many other villages which are accelerating to development, the charm of this village is its casual and slow pace of life, which is attracting a steady influx of new settlers. A walk through the tiny lanes of this picturesque hamlet exposes you to invigorating sights.

Marvel at the beautiful heritage homes laden with bougainvillea and flame colored flowers which dot its entire stretch. These archaic abodes are being restored and are now home to these new residents who have given up their hectic lifestyle in the metros and have opted to settle down in the tranquility and serenity that Assagao offers. Developers have also come up with contemporary homes, villas and apartments, offering a host of luxurious amenities like swimming pool, club house, recreational and play areas. Assagao also offers premium boutique villas and premium vacation homes on rent for an exotic holiday experience. This trend seems to have picked up steam lately, with many vacation homes and villas being offered for premium holidays and Airbnb rentals.

Walk through the narrow alleys to the leafy Badem Road and reach Villa Blanche Bistro. Yogini, a German lady who owns the chic little café, serves fresh continental and Mediterranean food, delicious pancakes



Contemporary Villas, Assagao



Portuguese House



St Cajetan Church



Traditional Portuguese House

Assagao stands out for its strategic location. Mapusa, the **local market town**, is just 3 km from the serene village and features an **authentic lively large outdoor market** every day, culminating into frenzy, on Friday Bazaar day.

and tempting smoothies in a warm and cheerful ambience. They also serve delectable breakfasts. Head to the majestic St. Cajetan Church, considered to be amongst the ten best churches in Goa. The church, which nestles along the Mapusa – Anjuna Road, is an architectural delight. Saint Cajetan is the patron saint of the jobseekers and the unemployed. After a hearty meal and soothing prayer, head for a bout of shopping to the fashionable upscale boutique, The Indian Story, run by the Swaika family. The boutique offers stylish contemporary ensembles for its fashion-conscious clientele. Besides clothes, they sell accessories, paintings, men’s wear, handcrafted gift items, pots, tableware and also have an informal café where they organize musical soirees and talks. Another popular haunt is the Cheshire Cat Gallery, a high-end jewellery boutique, owned by Kees Van Anandel and Karen Peace. They sell high-end pieces and take orders for custom-made jewellery as well. The couple has trained local women to make beaded jewellery, which is a hot-seller. Their clothing line is called Pink India, which has a beautiful range of ensembles. The gallery also has paintings and other artistic artifacts.

Besides the arty, genteel vibe, Assagao also offers alternate therapies for the weary soul with yoga schools, meditation centres and Ayurvedic therapies offering comprehensive

solutions for various ailments. There are a few seminaries in the vicinity like the Palloti Institute, which add to the spiritual-peace quotient.

One of the newest entrants into Assagao is the Gunpowder restaurant, alongside a sister establishment called People Tree, a quaint boutique, offering contemporary and fresh clothing. Owned and managed by Satish Warriar, the restaurant is a branch of the famous Hauz Khas, Delhi setup of the same name. A former journalist, Mr. Warriar has moved to Assagao seeking serenity and quietude. Head uphill on the Mapusa-Anjuna road to the Ghateshwar temple. The unique dark idol of Lord Ghateshwar is a marvel. The historic temple offers stunning vistas of the valley below.

Assagao stands out for its strategic location. Mapusa, the local market town, is just 3 km from the serene village and features an authentic lively large outdoor market every day, culminating into frenzy, on Friday Bazaar day. A variety of locally produced vegetables, exotic fruits, fresh seafood, meat, pickles and preserves, spices, earthen pots, coir mats, home-made cashew and coconut feni and an assortment of breads are available for sale. The famous Wednesday Flea Market at Anjuna Beach and Ingo’s Night Market at Arpora are in close vicinity of Assagao village. The market offers a unique collection

of handicrafts, beachwear, souvenirs, trinkets, jewellery, leather sandals, handicrafts, fashionable dresses and hats along with organic products, hammocks, innovative lights and artisan stalls. The night market features a lively outdoor performance with fire-eaters, jugglers, live bands, dancers, fashion shows and artists performing to an enthusiastic audience, under the starry skies, along with food and liquor stalls. These markets symbolize the ethnic culture and heritage of

the beach state.

Assagao is in close proximity to the Anjuna and Vagator beaches. The adventure lovers can head to the beach for fun activities like surfing, parasailing, jet skiing, yachting or dolphin spotting. The cozy hamlet offers a slice of everything you can wish for; peace and quietude of village life, pristine beaches of Anjuna and Vagator, imposing archaic houses, enchanting shops and little restaurants and cafes offering delectable cuisines.



Boutique at Villa Blanche Bistro