

Publication:	OUTLOOK traveller
Date:	August 2017

[FRESH SHEET]

THE GOOD LIFE



The first thing that struck me when I read the name of La Vida Varca, Sterling's hotel in South Goa was Ricky Martin's *Livin' La Vida Loca*. It settled down in my head and refused to go, right from the airport to the hotel. Located in Varca, way down in South Goa, La Vida Varca (from ₹4,500; +91-832-6686500, sterlingholidays.com) is a five-minute walk from Varca beach, nestled in a coconut grove. The building surrounds the pool, quite literally the watering hole of every kid in the hotel, with the sound of splashes filling the air as soon as the pool opens. I spent my first day in Goa poking around the area. Went down to Margao market and roamed around the seafood stalls, watching women yell out the deals on bangda, mussels and squid. My walk was quite rudely interrupted by the rain, which froze me to the bone and took me back to the hotel where I had to be thawed out with multiple bowls of pumpkin egg drop soup. Pumpkin and eggs was a combination that mildly alarmed me, but a few cautious spoonfuls later, I was all but pouring it down my throat. With that, I went to bed.

The next morning, I decided to do a bit of sightseeing. After a museum trip, that I later realised was clearly for children, I went to Bom Jesus Basilica where one had to fight with other tourists to pray in peace and two harassed old men begged people not to take pictures, which they blatantly ignored, while speculating loudly if the body of St Francis Xavier was real or not.

I woke up at the crack of dawn the next day and headed down to Varca beach. It was silent and empty, save for the waves and the dog that decided to follow me. It was the sort of place where one could play football and not worry about kicking someone else, or just sit with one's thoughts. Which was what I did, until the rain drenched me into submission and sent me back to my room. Having seen Varca, I now went to Benaulim, another similarly quiet beach. Having taken in as much of the sea as I could have, I walked into a tiny seafood shack and ordered Goa's famous bangda rawa fry along with a feni cocktail. Sated, I made it to the airport just in time for my flight.

■ SHRISHTI MATHEW