

traveller

*Happy
Holidays*

22 Winter
Vacations

Happy Places

360° Leti **KUMAON**

Vivenda dos
Palhaços **GOA**

Fort Seengh Sagar
RAJASTHAN

Neeleshwar
Hermitage
MALABAR

A cottage at
Neeleshwar Hermitage

10 Boutique destinations for the New Year

A PERFECT BREW

Susegad on tap. **Amit Dixit** checks into Goa's most promising new boutique hotel. Photographs by **Jason Mendez**

There are those who hold that Goa has gone to the dogs. But then they haven't stayed a night at the Vivenda dos Palhaços. They haven't paid their respects to Toby, basset hound-in-residence. They haven't retired to the dim-lit confines of the Chummery for a warm afternoon's siesta. They haven't sipped cold beer on Vivenda's verandah and watched life in rural Salcete go by. I have, so I'd suggest you take my word for it.

Once you've extracted yourself from Dabolim airport, turn south, not north. When there's just a whiff of South Goa in the air, you'll be in the village of Majorda. Turn away from the beach and towards the village proper, to the Costa *vaddo*, and down a quiet lane where Simon and Charlotte Hayward (and Toby Basset) have laid out the red carpet for you (I exaggerate, of course—you'll probably only interrupt their siesta). The brother-sister duo, may their tribe increase, have rescued another crumbling Goan mansion from oblivion, in what is a remarkable and affectionate bit of restoration. They're not your usual wide-eyed expats either. Simon and Charlotte (they're English) were both born and brought up in India, being the fourth generation of the family to live in the country, and by all accounts they're taking it sportingly.

Immediately upon arrival at the Vivenda, and at alarmingly frequent intervals thereafter, someone will offer you a drink. This should not surprise you, seeing as Simon's grandfather set up the Bengal Distilleries Co. around 1905, manufacturing spirits under the brand name Hayward's (so now you know why the name seems familiar). The company was sold to Shaw Wallace in the 1950s, and Simon's father worked for them for many years. The legendary beer to which the family lent its name is to this day the favoured tipple of truckers across the length and breadth of the subcontinent. Vivenda's Lorry Back Bar (the painted back of a truck forms the bar's shutter and, being Goa, is always down) pays cheery tribute to this devoted clientele.

Simon, who gave up a cushy advertising job in Mumbai to set up the place, bumped into the house a few years ago and promptly bought it up. Why? In his own words: "What does a guy in advertising do when he hits 40?" That the house was earlier held by the proprietors of Big Boss feni seems entirely appropriate. The Portuguese house, at the front of the property, was built in 1929. Towards the back is a house with rammed earth

walls, which is a bit older. After some netic restoration, a few seasons ago Vivenda welcomed its first visitors.

Each of the seven rooms (one is a in the back garden) has been done up a distinctive style and named after pla in India where the family has lived in past (in Bengal and Tamil Nadu). As enter the house, to the right is the s cious Konnagar, replete with four-pos bed and private balcony, named after settlement on the Hooghly where original Hayward distillery came up. T large bathroom boasts a cast iron ba tub rescued from the Royal Borm Yacht Club. (This is a house of curi ties—the barber's and dentist's ch plonked on the balcony, picked up ing Simon's stints in Singapore Hong Kong, made me extremely y ous.) To the left is Alipore, whose and narrow bathroom was created enclosing the space between the houses. Further on, in the older hous Madras (French doors, open-air b room), followed by Ballygunge g drapes, blue bathroom). I'm in C Sitting pretty in the middle of the c yard, the all-white Ooty, which has a open bath with smashed mirror m walls and nude prints, used to be kitchen. Beyond the pool in the back den is Chanpara, a tent kitted out old camping furniture, which recall shooting camp 40 miles north Calcutta where Simon spent a happy Christmases as a child. Ba real jewel is revealed last—Chumm self-contained cottage behind the

Simon Hayward with his utterly adorable basset hound Toby at the entrance of the Vivenda dos Palhaços

