

# After sun-n-sand, heritage houses beckon Goa tourists

By Sanjay Banerjee/TNN

**Panaji:** Goa's centuries-old Indo-Portuguese houses that dot the landscape offer a good opportunity for the government to boost heritage tourism in the state. Goa, where tourists outnumber the 13 lakh-odd population, can ratchet up the numbers of visitors if it hard-sells heritage tourism.

Armando Gonsalves of Trance-media on Sunday did his bit to showcase Goa's heritage houses. He converted a 250-year-old house into a venue for a heritage jazz yatra where participants relived a bygone era. Gerson Rebelo, owner of the house, said initially he was reluctant to rent his house for the show. "Normally, I would have said 'please excuse the mess'. But really I enjoyed doing up my house, polishing the Italian tiles and the oyster shell windows," Rebelo said.

Armando is delighted with the response he received for the show. "We plan to hold at least one show every month in heritage homes. We are also trying to get corporate



**Indo-Portuguese Houses Hold Potential For Heritage Tourism**

sponsorship for the owners of heritage homes," he said.

Like Armando, Karen Roach of Andromedia is excited about her concept—the travelling caravan serial—which promotes music,

fashion and art. "The fusion-like performance is held at old forts and heritage homes. On October 1, we performed with a Mumbai-based Goan jazz band on the island of Corjuem," Karen said.

The government too has decided to pitch in. "We will work out a package and offer financial and technical support for the restoration of old and beautiful houses," said tourism minister Mathany Saldanha who took charge recently. "We will try and allocate some funds during the current tourism season as tourists should move from the sea and sun to the interiors of Goa," the minister added. The 'Heritage Plus' scheme of the State Bank of India makes loans available for renovation and purchase of houses that are more than 50 years old.

"The beautiful houses of Goa and the antique furniture are good resources for tourism, something like the havelis of Rajasthan. To maintain them is a costly affair," said architect and Gerard da Cunha, who has set up a museum on houses of Goa.