

# PONG DAM

Dear Reader,

Experience the diverse wildlife of Pong Dam and the ancient marvels of Rock Cut Masroor Temple. Pong Dam's reservoir is a haven for migratory birds, including the elegant bar-headed geese and vibrant Brahminy ducks. Join us on an expedition to these fascinating destinations, where nature and history intertwine to create unforgettable experiences.

**-Hemraj Bairwa, IAS**

DC-Kangra & Chairman, Destination Management Committee, Pong Dam, Swadesh Darshan 2.0

## RICH WILDLIFE OF PONG WETLAND

**Birds:** The Pong wetland is a haven for birdwatchers, boasting over 420 bird species from 56 different families, a significant portion of India's avian diversity. Among the resident birds are jungle fowls, peafowls, Grey partridges, and Black Partridges. The waterfowl population includes Bar-headed geese, Pintails, common pochards, coots, Grebes, Cormorants, Herons, Storks, and many more captivating species.



**Fishes:** Dive into the aquatic world of Pong to encounter a variety of fish species, including Mehasheer, Katla, Rahoo, Mirgal, and Malli, alongside Carps and Mirror Carps. With a total of 27 fish species spanning five families, the lake and its tributaries offer a vibrant ecosystem teeming with aquatic life.

**Mammals:** Pong is home to an array of mammalian residents, with 24 recorded species. Encounter Common Leopards, Sambhers, Wild Boars, Porcupines, and a variety of mongoose species. Blue Bulls, Indian Smooth Otters, Jackals, Monkeys, and Langurs also call this diverse habitat their home.

**Amphibians and Reptiles:** Delve into the world of amphibians and reptiles in Pong, where you'll find four species of frogs, 18 species of snakes, four species of lizards, and four species of turtles. While exploring, keep an eye out for the rare and venomous inhabitants, including the Spectacled Cobra, Common Krait, Common Indian Krait, Russel's Viper, and Saw Scaled Viper.

Embark on an adventure through the wilderness of Pong Wetland, where every corner unveils a new marvel of nature waiting to be discovered.



## MASROOR ROCK CUT TEMPLES

### An Ancient Marvel Carved from a Monolithic Rock

Believed to be constructed by the Katoch dynasty - prominent rulers of the ancient Kangra region - during the 8th century, the temple stands as a remarkable architectural marvel. Carved from a single monolithic rock, it showcases intricate and magnificent engravings. Often referred to as the "Himalayan Pyramid," it stands as a testament to the remarkable architectural skills of our forebears.

### The Marvel of Ancient Engineering

One of the temple's most remarkable feature lies in its construction from a single (natural sandstone) rock, showcasing the extraordinary skill of ancient engineering and craftsmanship. Adorned with intricate carvings depicting various deities and mythological beings, it consistently captivates both tourists and local communities. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the temple features three entrances - the northeast, southeast, and northwest. The temple complex is symmetrically arranged on a square platform and is surrounded by smaller temples in a mandala pattern. First brought to the attention of archaeologists by Henry Shuttleworth in 1930, it has endured over a millennium due to the rock's exceptional hardness.

### **A masterpiece of mountain-style Hindu architecture**

The Masroor temples stand as rare examples of mountain-style Hindu architecture, showcasing finely carved columns, arches, and niches on their exteriors. These intricate carvings depict a graceful fusion of geometric and floral motifs. Interestingly, unlike other temples that typically face east, the main shrine of this temple faces northeast. Despite being affected by the 1905 Kangra earthquake, where parts of the temple suffered cracks and devastation, it remained standing due to its construction from a monolithic rock.

### **A marvel of spirituality**

Constructed in the early 8th century, the temple complex boasts a sacred pool alongside a square mandap within its outer premises. The platform is equipped with a distinctive drainage system, ensuring natural water drainage throughout the mandap. Housing nine deities including Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Indra, Ganesha, Saraswati, Kartikeya, Durga, and Lakshmi, the temple's carvings also vividly depict scenes of everyday life, showcasing couples in courtship, love and joy. Additionally, intricate carvings capture individuals enjoying music and engaging in various forms of art and culture.



**Timings:** 08:00 AM to 6:00 PM

**Best time to visit :** September to April

### **How to get there:**

When planning a journey to Kangra, accessibility is key. The nearest airport, Gaggal Airport, also known as Kangra Airport, is 36 kilometres away. This well-connected airport offers regular flights to and from major cities in India, including Delhi and Chandigarh.

The nearest major railway station is Pathankot Railway Station, situated around 77 kilometres from Kangra. With its extensive network, Pathankot Railway Station connects Kangra to various cities across India.

Kangra is well-connected by road to major cities of India. One can hire a cab or take local transport to reach here. The temple is 172 Km from Ludhiana, 198Km from Amritsar, 218 Km from Chandigarh and 45Km from Dharamshala.