

PONG DAM

Dear Reader,

Visit Pong Dam in Himachal Pradesh to witness the spiritual aura of Kaleshwar Mahadev Temple and indulge in the flavors of Kangra cuisine. Enjoy a memorable cultural and culinary experience in this picturesque destination this August!

-Hemraj Bairwa, IAS

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

KALESHWAR MAHADEV TEMPLE

Kaleshwar Mahadev Temple, 16km from the heritage village of Pragpur-Kangra on the banks of the River Beas, is situated in the town of Kaleshwar. The temple is popular for its ancient monuments, fine stone work and ancient mythology. Nestled amidst verdant hills and enveloped in an aura of timeless spirituality, the Kaleshwar Mahadev Temple stands as a beacon of divine grace and sacred serenity. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the epitome of cosmic consciousness and eternal bliss, this ethereal sanctuary captivates all who enter its hallowed grounds. The temple's exquisite architecture and intricate carvings narrate tales of devotion and transcendence, while the soothing chants and fragrant incense create an ambiance of profound tranquillity. Here, seekers and pilgrims find solace, seeking divine blessings and immersing themselves in the mystic realm where the finite merges with the infinite, and mortal hearts find solace in the eternal embrace of Lord Shiva.





The Kaleswar Mahadev Temple, also known as Kalesar, is renowned for its association with the Maha Rudra of Mata Chintpurni. Situated on the bank of the River Vyas, it is a serene spot ideal for meditation, complemented by the nearby Hindu cremation ghat. The temple attracts a significant number of devotees during Maha Shivratri and the month of Shravan. A popular local belief holds that at the onset of each monsoon, the river's flow increases until it reaches the Shiva Lingam, after which the water recedes. The temple is reputed to be 400 years old, with its construction initially begun by the Pandavas during their exile and later completed by the King of the Katoch dynasty.

The temple is open daily from 7:00AM to 8:30PM; the best time to visit is between September and June.

KANGRA CUISINE - AMBUA

During the mango season, Ambua is one of the most delightful regional dishes from Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. This sweet-and-sour mango dish pairs beautifully with hot steamed rice.

Here's an easy recipe to follow"

- Ambua is prepared by peeling the mangoes and cooking them in a pressure cooker with a glass of water
- Once cool, squeeze out the pulp
- In a pan, heat mustard oil and add mustard seeds, allowing them to splutter
- Add asafoetida, followed by sautéed ginger and garlic, and cook onions until pink and translucent
- Mix in the mango pulp with salt, add the peeled mangoes, and let the mixture cook for 15 minutes
- Serve hot with rice or flatbread for a delicious treat



PATRODE OR PATRODU

To make Patrodu (Patrode), a popular hill snack made from Arbi (Taro root) leaves, follow the steps below.

Prepare the Batter:

In a mixing bowl, combine 1 cup besan (gram flour), 2-3 chopped green chillies, and spices: ½ tsp red chili powder, 1 tsp turmeric, ½ tsp cumin powder, 2 tsp coriander powder, 1 tsp garam masala, ½ tsp ajwain, and salt to taste.

Optional: Add chopped fenugreek leaves, ginger-garlic paste, and yogurt.

Gradually mix in water until the batter reaches a pancake batter consistency.

Prepare for Steaming:

- Grease a steaming tray or plate.
- Pour the prepared batter into the greased tray or plate.

Steam the Batter:

- Steam the batter for 20-30 minutes.
- Check doneness by inserting a toothpick into the batter; it should come out clean.

Prepare the Tempering:

- Heat oil in a small pan.
- Add mustard seeds and let them splutter.
- Add sesame seeds and curry leaves, sauté briefly.

Finish the Patrodu:

- Once the steamed batter has cooled slightly, cut it into pieces.
- Pour the prepared tempering over the cut pieces.

Serve:

- Serve warm with chutney or yogurt.

