

Kurukshetra

Kurukshetra the holy pilgrimage in which 360 places of pilgrimage related to the Mahabharata can be seen. It is one of those holy towns that have borne the imprint of Lord Krishna's footsteps. Tradition holds that the great 18-day battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas in which Lord Krishna played his enigmatic part, as described in the pages of the epic Mahabharata, was fought on the plains of Kurukshetra. Kurukshetra lies on the Delhi-Ambala stretch of the National Highway number 1.

Each year in November and December, the Brahma Sarovar attracts large crowds to observe Deep Daan and Aarti, the ceremonies especially held to celebrate Gita Jayanti. There are also theatre performances, music recitals and pageants that bring the atmosphere to life.

Places of Interest

Bhishma Kund

Bhishma Kund at Naraktari: The place where Arjuna shot an arrow towards the earth to quench Bhishma Pitamah's thirst.

Brahma Sarovar

Among the holiest of water tanks in India, the Brahma Sarovar is an important place to visit in Kurukshetra. This is a vast water body. In the centre of the tank stands the Sarveshwar Mahadev Temple looking like a lotus. The eastern section of the tank is 1800 ft long and 1500 ft wide while the western section is a square of 1500 ft length and 1500 ft breadth. The tank is 15 ft deep. This large water body is edged with 20 ft wide platforms, stairs and a 40 ft wide 'parikarma'. In this section, a number of meditation chambers have been built for the convenience of pilgrims. It is believed that it is the cradle of Indian civilization because Lord Brahma, the Creator of the Universe, conceived the Earth here. A dip in the Sarovar bears the sanctity of performing Ashwamedha Yajna, which, the scriptures say, absolves one of all the sins. The months of November and December are the time when migratory birds flock around Brahma Sarovar and add an exhilarating environmental setting to the sanctity of the place. The tank lies about 3 km from the railway station. A number of temples lie in close vicinity of this holy water body, of which the prominent one is the Lakshmi Narayan Temple. This temple lies opposite the Brahma Sarovar. It is dedicated to Lord Narayan and His consort Lakshmi. The architecture of the temple belongs to the late 18th century, which adds a touch of history to the visit. The temple's tall pinnacle proclaims its presence from a distance.

Panorama and Sri Krishna Museum

A touch of history and archaeology of the area can be seen at the Panorama project and the Sri Krishna Museum setup near the Brahma Sarovar.

Sannihit Sarovar

Sannihit Sarovar is yet another sacred water tank. Legend has it that hundreds of years ago people, burdened by their sins, sought help from the Lord. At this, the Lord said 'On the days of Amavasyas (nights of total darkness) or on the days of an eclipse, if you collect the water of Sannihit tank, your sins will be absolved.' Ever since, the tank has been the venue of millions of devotees who perform the Ashwamedha Yajna. The Kumbh Mela is yet another major event related to the legendary Sannihit Sarovar. The sarover spreads 1500 ft in length and 550 ft in breadth. Bathing ghats and steps have been set up here for pilgrims. Temples dedicated to Dhruva Narayan, Mother Goddess Durga and Lord Hanuman can be seen here. It lies about 1 km from the Brahma Sarover.

Gurudwaras

A few gurdwaras at Kurukshetra have acquired great sanctity and have become places of pilgrimage. The site where Guru Nanak stayed is now worshipped as Gurdwara Sadbhiti. Another gurdwara stands besides it where the sixth Guru Har Gobind stayed during a visit. Again, the ninth Guru, Shri Tegh Bahadur stayed at a spot near the Sthaneshwar Tirtha that is marked by a gurdwara. Another prominent gurdwara called Raj Ghat is devoted to the memory of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh.

Places of Interest around Kurukshetra

Thanesar

Thanesar is one of the most sacred places of Hindu pilgrimage. The town derives its name from the words Sthan-esvar or the abode of God (Mahadev). The town was once the centre of great learning. Today it is famous for the Sthaneshwar Mahadev temple and the Ma Bhadra Kali Temple. It lies adjoining the town of Kurukshetra and is often called its twin town. It is a sacred town for Hindus because the Shiva in the form of linga (organ) was first worshipped here. Kuru, the Kauravas and Pandavas' ancestors meditated on the banks of the Yamuna and Parasurama killed many Kshatriyas here. King Harsha was born here, ascended the throne at the age of 16 and ruled for 41 years, sharing his seat of power with his widowed sister whom he had rescued from Sati (self-immolation). During his rule, the renowned Chinese traveler Huen Tsang lived in Thanesar for a number of years and Bana Bhatt, the celebrated Sanskrit scholar, met Harsha here.

Sheikh Chehli Mausoleum

The tomb of Sheikh Chilhi Jalal is a fascinating monument, octagonal in shape, crowned with a dome of white marble and surrounded by a white marble courtyard. Tourists may also check out Chini Masjid and Pathar Masjid, two outstanding monuments built in the Mughal architectural style.

Sthaneshvara Mahadev Temple

It can be said without a doubt that the presiding deity of Thanesar is Lord Shiva. It is after the Sthaneshvar Shiva Linga Temple that Thanesar gets its name. Vaman Puran categorically mentions the importance of this temple and legends tell us that Lord Brahma Himself laid the first Linga of Lord Shiva at the temple. Renovated in recent times, the temple has a white amla (fruit shaped) dome. A large water body has been designed before the temple. A Gurudwara that lies opposite the Sthaneshvar temple marks the spot sanctified by the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Ma Bhadra Kali temple

The famous Ma Bhadra Kali temple celebrates the legend of Sati Mata. It lies a short drive from the Sthanesar Mahadev Temple. The learned say Sati's lower limb fell here, granting the area the sanctity of a Sidh Peethor a place where wishes are fulfilled. The temple has been renovated with red stone and the inner sanctum has been beautified. At a well in the precincts, devotees offer terracotta horses as offerings in thanks-giving, each time their wishes are fulfilled. The inner sanctum of the temple houses both the awe inspiring and the sublime forms of the Mother Goddess Kali. Thousands of devotees throng the temple on the holy days of Navratre (March-April and September-October) and every Saturday.

Pehowa

It is an ancient town not far from Kurukshetra has been a centre of pilgrimage for ages. It is on the, left bank of the sacred Saraswati, twelve kilometers from Thanesar. Pehowa was built sometime in ad 882 although an inscription on a temple claims that it was actually built in ad 895. The town derives its name from King Prithu. On the death of his father says a legend, the King sat on the bank of river Saraswati, offering water to all visitors. As a result, the place came to be known as Prithudaka or Prithu's pool. The town which he afterwards built on the spot was called by the same name. With time, the town of Prithu came to be called Pehowa. Today, it is an ancient place of great sanctity, where prayer and 'pind daan' for ancestors is believed to grant 'moksha' or redemption from the cycle of birth and death.

Ban Ganga

The legend of the Ban Ganga goes back to the final days of the Mahabharata battle when the patriarch, Bhishma, lay mortally wounded on a bed of arrows. In his dying moments, he felt thirsty and, as the patriarch of both the Kauravas and Pandavas, sent for Arjun. It is said that Arjuna's arrow brought the waters of the holy Ganga to quench the thirst of Bhishma. Today the site is worshipped as Bhishma Kund and lies some 12 km from Kurukshetra.

Other Temples

Pehowa is also famous for temples devoted to Shiva and his son Kartikya. Unlike the other temples, the temple dedicated to Shiva, has no linga. Instead, it has a panch-mukhi (5 faced) idol of Lord Shiva which is said to be one of its kind. Haryana Tourism runs its Anjan Yatrika Resort for pilgrims visiting Pehowa

Jyotisar

Jyotisar, or the source of light and inspiration, is the birth place of the holy scripture Bhagwad Gita. The site lies some 12 km from Kurukshetra on the Pehowa road. Jyotisar delights with its fine waterbody, bathing ghats and small temples. Here the marble image of Lord Sri Krishna and Arjun stand immortalised in marble: Lord Krishna explaining to Arjun, the doctrine of Karma through the Gita Updesh. A banyan (believed to be an off-shoot of the original tree under which the Lord gave His Sermon) gives shade to the area.