

# Present Tourism Resources in Himachal Pradesh: Study of Bilaspur District

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**Abstract:** This study has examine the present tourism resources of District Bilaspur and utilized secondary information obtained from Books and office of deputy director of tourism and civil aviation Shimla and Mandi/Bilaspur to assess the existing tourism resources within the Bilaspur. The study has revealed that tourism in Bilaspur is mainly related with religious activities, water sports, Heritage Tourism, fort, lakes, hills and Dams.

**Keywords:** Bilaspur, Civil aviation, Deputy Director, Fort, Heritage, Secondary information, Tourism.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian Tourism is primarily based on culture which contain sites of archaeological interest, historical building, monument, museum, and religious institutions and places of historical importance. On the other hand, it is also famous for its festivals, arts and handicraft, music, folkdance. Similarly, Native life and customs are come under traditional attraction. Scenic attraction are consisting of flora and fauna which may include the places of scenic beauty i.e. mountain, waterfalls, water bodies, rivers, beaches, jungles, desserts, snow valley spas etc. In 1991, Luhn Cricket ground, a famous cricket ground in Bilaspur has been established.

According to historical background, Bilaspur was an organised princely state known as 'Kahloor' before it merged with the Indian union after the country attained independence. It became a part of Himachal Pradesh in 1954 and was made into a district. The princely state came into being in 7th century AD, with the ruling dynasty tracing their roots to Chanderwanshi Rajputs of Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh. Kot Kahloor till 1650 AD remained the capital, when ruler Deep Chand decided to shift it to the left bank of River Satluj. Historic Old Bilaspur, capital of the princely state, got completely submerged with the completion of Bhakra Dam in 1963. The sprawling new Bilaspur town has come up on higher ground near the old capital (Balokhra 1998).

### Tourism in Bilaspur

Tourism in Bilaspur is primarily related with religious activities and water sports at famous Gobind Sagar Lake. The temple of Shri Naina Devi is the main attraction for people from near and far. Tourism in Bilaspur is also useful for people interested in looking one of the highest straight gravity dam in the world known as Bhakra Dam. Bilaspur is also famous for its old forts. Bilaspur has a much planned city structure making it easy to move around. One of the main attractions of Bilaspur is the famous and vast Gobind Sagar Lake which is an artificial lake formed as a result of the world famous Bhakra Dam on the river Sutlej in district Bilaspur. It is one of the world's highest gravity dams, the Bhakra rises 225.5 m above its lowest foundations. Water sports are available - as are speed-boat and ferry rides. In October and November, when the water and water level of the reservoir is at its peak, a series of regattas are also organised by the Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation. Water-skiing, sailing, kayaking and water-scooter racing become available at this time. Bilaspur is easily accessible from Punjab and Chandigarh and from other important places of Himachal Pradesh. The temperature is somewhat hot but not very hot around the lake. Bilaspur has a number of famous and important fairs i.e. Nalwari Fair, Gugga Fair, Baisakhi Fair, Shahtlai Fair etc. and some important festivals i.e. Chet, Baisakhi, Basant-Panchami, Janam-Ashtami, Sair etc. which make Bilaspur a nice place to visit during these fairs and festivals. Bilaspur also has a number of famous temples i.e. Shri Naina Devi Temple, VyasGufa, and Lakshmi Narayan Temple, etc. which provide a pleasing experience to religious minded people. The top tourist attractions to seen in Bilaspur are: Bhakra Nangal Dam, Gobind Sagar Lake, Water Sports and Fishing, Paragliding (Bandla hill are also a popular spot for paragliding), Sri Naina Devi Ji, Vyas Cave, The Hotels in Bilaspur (Hotel Panchwati), Kandraur Bridge, Shopping in Bilaspur (Tibetein market located on the Shimla Kangra Road, Temple Nahar Singh Dhaulra, Koldam Dam, Laxmi Narayan Mandir, Markandeya Rishi Temple, Fort Bachhretu, Kahlur Fort, Tiun and Sriun Forts, Bahadurpur Fort (Balokhra 1998).

### Study Area

Bilaspur is a city and a municipal council in Bilaspur district in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India. Bilaspur is located at 31.33°N 76.75°E with an average elevation of 673 m (2,208 ft). It lies at the foot of the Bandla Hills, near the reservoir of Govind Sagar on the Sutlej River. It is the first major town after entering Himachal Pradesh on the way to Manali from Chandigarh.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It identifying the void in the existing review of literature in the field of Identification of tourism Resources, the tourism management literature has been focusing on the tourism Development.

Aynalem, Akele, Alemayehu, and Molla (2015) Examine the Assessment and Identification of the Tourism Resources of Bale Zone, Ethiopia Local communities, tourism experts from culture and tourism offices of Bale Zone and 150 samples were

selected for survey questionnaires purposively. In addition to this, four focus group discussions were held and 51 key informants were purposively selected. The result revealed that the zone is bestowed with spectacular scenery such as BMNP scenic beauty, Wabe Shebele and Gasera gorges, Konodria standing stone, Sof Umar, Welmel waterfalls and endemic plant, animal, and bird species. Tangible and intangible cultural and historical tourism resources such as, Dirre Sheik Hussein Shrine, Oda Roba, Madawalabu and Oda Jila historical place are the major resources of Bale. However, Bale is limited potentials in terms of tourism infrastructural facilities and services. Financial and human resource incapacity, inaccessibility and less community awareness were the major problems identified in the study.

**Alaeddinoglu and Can (2011)** Identify and assess the natural resources having tourism potential to be developed in the western part of Lake Van basin. The increasing environmental awareness among consumers has lead tourism managers and planners to satisfy this type of tourists' needs by searching new tourism resources. First step for the effective planning is to systematically determine the resources and assess the values of them. The assessment criteria in this paper are attraction levels, infrastructure, level of environmental degradation, and accessibility. The 23 natural resources in the research area were classified based on Priskin's control list approach by applying several experts' opinions and making journey to the sites. The places of nature-based tourism attractions were determined with Global Positioning System and this information were evaluated in the Geographic Information System based program of MapInfo and hundreds of pictures were taken from all perspectives in the research area. The findings of research revealed that the sites have middle and high levels of attraction and low level of infrastructure.

### Objectives of the Study

- The main objective of the study to identify the tourism resources of Bilaspur District
- To assess tourism potentials of Bilaspur Tourism

### III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The main Focus of the study was to identify the tourism resources of Bilaspur District and to assess tourism potentials of Bilaspur. Only secondary data sources were used that is present and collected from different books Journals and through RTI application from Office of Deputy Director tourism and civil aviation office Shimla and Deputy Director (Tourism) Mandi. Further, the study has also utilized the information obtained from official website of Himachal tourism.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research study have been enumerated under sub-headings i.e.

1. Places of Tourist Interest
2. Places of Historical Interest
3. Culture & Heritage
4. Sports/ Paragliding/Water Sports

#### 1. Places of Tourist Interest

##### 1.1. Bhakra Dam

Bhakhra Dam, the highest straight gravity dam in the world situated in Naina Devi Sub-Tehsil about 14 km from Nangal town occupies the predominant position amongst the places of tourist interest. On the historic day of 17th November, 1955 later Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru placed the first bucket of concrete at the foundation. The construction of dam was completed in October, 1962 (*Balokhra 1998*).

The height of the dam is 226 meters, length at the top is 518 meters and width 9 meters. It has a length of 99 meters at the bottom and width 402 meters. The project derives its name from two villages Bhakhra and Nangal situated on the foot hills of the low Himalayan ranges.

Bhakhra occupies a very important place on the India's tourist map and has rightly been described as a "New Temple of Resurgent India", by the late Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru. The project authorities have set up a Public Relation Office in Nangal Township which provides necessary help and guidance to the tourists (Source: <https://hpbilaspur.nic.in/>).

##### 1.2. Gobind Sagar Lake

The unparalleled scenic view of rolling hills and plains overlooking the azure blue tint of the man-made reservoir of the Gobind Sagar Lake is an alluring vista to gaze upon. The gigantic reservoir is formed on the Sutlej River by the Bhakra Dam, one of the highest gravity dams in the world. The Gobind Sagar Lake is named in honour of Gobind Singh the tenth Sikh Guru. The eye-catching Govind Sagar Lake starts from district of Bilaspur and extends into the district Una. The views of the artificial lake from the lofty dam or the elevated areas around are enchanting and worth a visit. Famous for recreational activities such as water sports and picnicking and obviously the scenic beauty, large number of tourists frequent the vast water reservoir for a jaunt. There are hardly any reasons for Tourists not to stop. The animals that can be seen here are Panther, Wolf, Chausinga, Sambar, Hyena, Sloth bear, Nilgai, Chinkara and wild boar. A variety of fish, which includes Mahaseer, Carp Catla, Mrigal and Rohu are found in the lake that make it a haven for recreational fishing. Fishing season is open in March-April and October-November.

There are provisions for water sports speed boats and ferry rides. In October and November, when the water level of the reservoir is at its peak, a series of regattas are also organizing by the department of Tourism and Civil Aviation. Water-skiing, sailing, kayaking and water scooter racing are popular water sports activities during this period (Source: HPTDC).

### 1.3. New Bilaspur Town

The old Bilaspur town, has now been submerged in the Govind Sagar. New Bilaspur Town is situated just above the old town of Bilaspur at a height of 670 metres above the mean sea level. The New Township Bilaspur has been conceived, planned and built on modern lines and should be regarded as the first planned hill town of the country. The new planned township, 64-km from Kiratpur on the Manali National Highway No-21, has come up which is the seat of district headquarters. The pleasure of a visit will be enhanced manifold when a motor launch is preferred as the means of travel, gliding through cool and enchanting waters of the lake. The best months from visiting this place are from September to December (Source: <https://hpbilaspur.nic.in/>).

## 2. Places of Historical Interest

### 2.1. Fort of Bachhretu

Bachhretu is a peaceful, nice place located on western slope of Kotdhar just 3 kms southward to Shahtalai. It is 3000 ft above sea level. There is small ancient fort in the district Bilaspur at Bachhretu. The well Known fort of Bachhretu lies in Kot Hill. Kot Hill is 30 Kms in length. The site commands a magnificent and sweeping view of Gobind Sagar and the surrounding hills. The fort was constructed by Raja Ratan Chand of Bilaspur who ruled from 1355 to 1406. Obviously the relics are as old as about six hundred years and indicate that the stronghold was of a rectangular shape, the longer arms about 100 metres and shorter about 50 meters, built of hammer-dressed stones. From the portions of the enclosing walls, still existing here and there, it can be assumed to have been about 20 meters in height. The thickness of its walls must have been one metre tapering towards the top. The space inside was, perhaps, divided into numerous room-shaped compartments out of which about fifteen can be traced even now. Walls of one of the room are exceedingly high, measuring about ten to twelve metres. A water tank is also said to have existed. A very interesting small temple, housing two busts of the goddess Asht Bhuja (eight armed) and some other deities is still extant (Balokhra 1998).

### 2.3. Fort of Tiun

Relics of this fort is situated on the top of a hill known as the Tiun range, 17 Kms. in length, at distance of about 45-Kms. from Bilaspur, on the Ali Khad crossing Ghumarwin-Ladraur motorable road. It is about 10-km from Ghumarwin proper still serves to remind of the ancient turbulent times when wars in this area were perhaps a routine feature. Raja Kahn Chand got it constructed in 1142 Vikrami. The area of the fort around 14 hectare. It is rectangle in shape. The length of the fort was 400 meters with a breadth 200 meters. The height of the wall is varies from 2 meters to 10 meters. The main gate of the fort is 3 meters height and 5 and a 1/2 meters breadth. There were two water tanks inside the fort. Also there were two granary which contains 3000 kg grain (Source: HPTDC).

## 3. Culture & Heritage

### 3.1. Sri Naina Devi Ji

The Temple of Shri Naina Devi Ji is situated on a hilltop in Bilaspur District of Himachal Pradesh situated at a height of 1219 m above sea level, it was built by Raja Bir Chand in the 8th century. Naina Devi Temple has a lot of mystical folk tales surrounding it, which attracts various tourists travelling in this region. This temple was constructed on a triangular hillock and is considered one of the 52 Shakti Peeths of Sati. All the major festivals talked about in the Hindu mythology are celebrated at the temple with great vigour, turning it into a melting pot of festivities all around the year. This holy place witnesses the huge crowd of pilgrims and devotees round the year and especially during Shravan Ashtami and in the Navratras of Chaitra & Ashwin. Special fair is organized during Chaitra, Shravan and Ashwin Navrati, which attracts millions of visitors from Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and other corners of the country (Balokhra 1998).

### 3.2. Vyas Cave

The name of sage Vyas is well known in these parts. It is situated at the foot of the new township, the belief is that Vyas Rishi meditated in this cave. The origin of the town, Vyaspur is believed to have been derived from this cave. The Vyas Rishi of Mahabharata fame philosophy of life in meditation in this cave, which lies on the left bank of river Satluj. It is a place of pilgrimage (Balokhra 1998).

### 3.3. Markandeyas

This is a famous shrine about 20 km from Bilaspur, in tehsil Sadar named after renowned 'rishi' Markandeya who lived and worshiped there. According to a legend a tunnel connected Markand and Vyas cave and the two 'rishis', Vyas and Markandeya used to visit each other through this sub-terrain path. In addition to a shrine there is also a water spring of ancient fame where a night fair is held annually on 'Baisakhi' day (Balokhra 1998).

### 3.4. Nalwari fair

One of the popular festival rather we will say a famous fair of Bilaspur is **Nalwari Mela**. This fair is organized in the **Luhnu ground**. It is one of the cultural as well as historical fair of Bilaspur which is conducted for almost 7 days every year. Mela

Management Committee takes the initiative in organizing this fair. Cultural nights are part of this fair and local artists of Bilaspur participate in this cultural nights to entertain the visitors to this fair. **Yuvak Mandals, Mahila Mandals** and several other youth clubs participate in this fair with their cultural performances. The **cultural nights** are really colorful and enjoying.

Tourists from different parts of India as well of Himachal visit Bilaspur during the **Nalwari Mela** time. Other popular events in this fair includes **wrestling bouts** for four long days, government departments exhibitions, **cattle fair** for three days and other sports competitions. It attracts large number of people for these events (Source: <https://hpbilaspur.nic.in/>).

#### 4. Sports/ Paragliding/Water Sports

##### 4.1. Paragliding

Meanwhile R.P. Gautam who had come on retirement from Central Reserve Police Force as Commandant, visualized the vast potential in paragliding from Bandla Mountain and he got in contact with Shakti Singh Chandel, the then Director Tourism and Civil Aviation, to extend all possible help to promote paragliding not only in Bilaspur, but also in whole in Himachal Pradesh. The Director Tourism, who himself belonged to Bilaspur, took keen interest in approving Bandla top as take-off site, gave financial assistance to run paragliding courses for Bilaspur under Himachal Aero Adventure Institute Bilaspur, which under expert guidance of Mr. Bruce Mills from New Zealand and Alexi Garisimov from Russia, got the pilots trained. Thus Bilaspur was brought on World Map in Paragliding (Source: <https://hpbilaspur.nic.in/>).

Bandla Hills gives you almost eight hours of flying time as against 3 to 4 hours maximum at Billing or Manali. Moreover it has vast and safe landing grounds on the bank of Govind Sagar Lake at Luhn Ground. From training point of view, Bilaspur can be considered the best in whole of Asia. It is laid down in the training manual that training in instability maneuvers during advance pilot course i.e. Dynamic Stall, deep stall, spiral drive, spin recovery, asymmetric tuck, front tuck and deployment of Reserve Parachute, should be carried out over a broad base of water for reasons. For this, there is hardly any place, where there is any huge lake just beside the landing site. Bilaspur has the privilege of having unique combination of Air Sports in one stretch, which is very rare (Source: HPTDC).

##### 4.2. Water Sports

Gobind Sagar reservoir in Bilaspur (H.P.) with its 56 km length and nearly 3 km breadth. It offers a variety of water sports activities in close collaboration with the Directorate tourism and Civil Aviation and Directorate of Mountaineering and Allied Sports. Due to fluctuating level of Lake here, the water sports are mainly confined to half of the year i.e. August to January. During this period the activities include swimming, surfing, water-skiing, kayaking, rowing, canoeing, white water river rafting. Courses are conducted at three levels – beginners, intermediate and advance. For this Tourism Department of Himachal Pradesh has constructed a huge Water Sports Complex in Luhn Ground, Bilaspur with all the boarding, lodging and equipment facilities (Source: HPTDC).

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

It has been found that Bilaspur district still has large untapped tourism potential. The above mentioned tourists place are major tourism resource in the District. Bilaspur. The tourism statistics obtained from official website of Himachal tourism has also revealed that the tourist inflow to Bilaspur district in 2018 was 1437351 in which 1437129 are Indian and 186 foreigners (HPTDC). Negligible air and rail link in the state and Bilaspur district is main reason behind inadequate flow of foreign tourists in District. As majority of the tourists were religious and adventure tourists.

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