

# Biking, Rafting & Kayaking

## Includes →

Mountain-Bike Routes .....	311
Rafting & Kayaking Routes...	316

## Best Places to be a Beginner

- ▶ Trisuli River (p316)
- ▶ Pokhara to Sarangkot & Naudanda (p316)
- ▶ Upper Sun Kosi (p317)

## Best Places to be an Adrenaline Junkie

- ▶ Upper Mustang – Jomsom to Lo Manthang (p313)
- ▶ Marsyangdi (p318)
- ▶ Karnali (p319)

## Why Go?

While Nepal may be synonymous with trekking, its world-class rapids and exhilarating mountain descents are made for white-water rafting and mountain biking. The bike trails suggested here are best suited to more experienced riders with a good level of fitness. And while most can be done on your own, you'll often need to rely on locals for directions, so hiring a guide or signing up for an organised tour will make life considerably easier. Meanwhile the rafting and kayaking routes are suitable for beginners and pros alike, and your choice is dependent on how much of a buzz you can handle.

With the nature of mountain biking and rafting, these physical pursuits were not adversely affected by the 2015 earthquakes, but check before you set off for a route to make sure the trails are clear and rivers are flowing freely.

## When to Go

**For cyclists** October to November offers generally clear skies, warm day time temperatures and it's not too cold at night.

**For rafting** Mid- to late October through to the end of November offers the warmest waters and rapids that are exciting without being life threatening. March to May is good for families.

## MOUNTAIN-BIKE ROUTES

Note that some features of these biking routes may have changed since the 2015 earthquake – seek local advice before you set off.

### The Scar Road from Kathmandu

**Distance** 65km

**Duration** Seven hours, or two days with overnight in Kakani

**Start/Finish** Kathmandu

**Summary** Fine views and a challenging descent through a national park, after a tough initial climb of around 700m.

This trip northwest of Kathmandu can be a fairly demanding ride, and is suited to more experienced riders; a guide is recommended. You'll see some damage from the 2015 earthquake but trails are open for business.

Leaving Kathmandu (elevation 1337m), head towards Balaju on the Ring Rd 2km north of Thamel, and follow the sealed Trisuli Bazaar road towards Kakani, 23km away at an altitude of 2073m. You start to climb out of the valley as the track twists and turns past Nagarjun Hill, which provides the road with a leafy canopy. Once you're through the initial pass and out of the valley, the road continues northwest and offers a view of endless terraced fields to your left. (If you don't fancy the climb, you can avoid cycling on the road by putting your bike on the roof of the early-morning bus to Dhunche and getting off here.) On reaching the summit of the ridge, take a turn right (at a clearly marked T-junction), instead of continuing down to Trisuli Bazaar. (If you go too far, you reach a checkpoint just 100m beyond.) At this point magnificent views of the Ganesh Himal (*himal* means a range with permanent snow) provide the inspiration required to complete the remaining 4km of steep and deteriorating blacktop to the crown of the hill at **Kakani** for a well-deserved rest. It's an excellent idea to overnight here at the Tara Gaon, or another such guesthouse, and savour the dawn views over the Himalaya.

After admiring the view, descend for just 30m beyond the gate and take the first left onto a 4WD track. This track will take you

through the popular picnic grounds frequented on Saturday by Kathmandu locals. Continue in an easterly direction towards Shivapuri. The track narrows after a few kilometres near a metal gate on your left. Through the gate, you are faced with some rough stone steps and then a 10-minute push/carry up and over the hilltop to an army checkpoint. Here it's necessary for foreigners to pay a Rs 500 entry fee to the Shivapuri National Park, plus a Rs 1000 fee for their bike. Exit the army camp, turning right where the Scar Rd is clearly visible in front of you. You are now positioned at the day's highest point – approximately 2200m.

Taking the right-hand track you will start to descend dramatically along an extremely steep, rutted single trail with several water crossings. The trail is literally cut into the side of the hill, with sharp drops on the right that challenge a rider's skill and nerve. As you hurtle along, take time to admire the view of the sprawling Kathmandu Valley below – it's one of the best. In recent years the trail has become quite overgrown so you may have to carry your bike for several stretches and seek out the correct path. A guide would be useful for this section.

The trail widens, after one long gnarly climb before the saddle, then it's relatively flat through the protected Shivapuri watershed area. This beautiful mountain-biking section lasts for nearly 25km before the trail descends into the valley down a 7km spiral on a gravel road. This joins a sealed road, to the relief of jarred wrists, at **Budhanilkantha**, where you can buy refreshments. Take a moment to see the Sleeping Vishnu just up on your left at the main intersection. From here the sealed road descends gently for the remaining 15km back into the bustle of Kathmandu, although this part of the ride is generally through busy city traffic and not much fun.

### Kathmandu to Pokhara

**Distance** 263km

**Duration** Five days

**Start** Kathmandu

**Finish** Pokhara

**Summary** Fine views and challenging trails that take you off the beaten track and through historic Newari towns.