



# Pokhara

061 / POP 265,000 / ELEV 884M

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Temple Tree Resort & Spa (p217)
- ➔ Nanohana Lodge (p216)
- ➔ Hotel Nirvana (p216)
- ➔ Dhaulagiri Lodge (p232)
- ➔ Begnas Coffee House (p230)

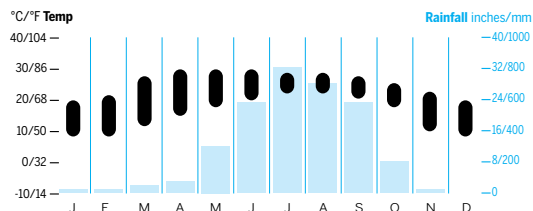
## Why Go?

Far from the earthquake epicenter and almost unaffected by the disaster, Pokhara ticks all the right boxes, with spectacular scenery, adventure activities, and accommodation and food choices galore. Whether you've returned from a three-week trek or endured a bus trip from hell, Lakeside Pokhara is the perfect place to recharge your batteries. The scene is a chilled-out version of Thamel, stretching along the shore of a tranquil lakewith bobbing paddle boats. From the lake, and possibly even from your hotel bed, you can enjoy a clear view of the snowcapped mountains, just 20 or so kilometres away.

There's much more to Pokhara than its laid-back charm. It also boasts a booming adventure sports industry; it is arguably the best paragliding venue on the globe and is surrounded by white-water rivers. There's a fascinating museum dedicated to the world-famous Gurkha soldier. And last but not least, it's the gateway to the world-famous treks in and around the Annapurna Range and beyond.

## When to Go

### Pokhara



**Oct–Mar** Ideal time for clear mountain views and fewer rainy days.

**28 Dec–1 Jan** Enjoy food and cultural shows at the Pokhara Street festival.

**Apr** Tourists and locals alike celebrate the Nepali New Year.

## Climate

Pokhara sits about 400m lower than Kathmandu, so the autumn and winter temperatures are generally much more comfortable. Even in winter you can get away with a T-shirt during the daytime and you'll only need a sweater or jacket for evenings and early mornings. From June to September the skies open and the mountains spend a lot of time behind blankets of cloud.

## Dangers & Annoyances

There have been infrequent reports of solo walkers being mugged trekking up to the World Peace Pagoda and around Sarangkot, as well as reports of attacks on solo women near trance parties. Clearly there's a safety-in-numbers message for both activities.

## POKHARA

### Sights

Forming a spectacular backdrop to Pokhara is the dramatic Annapurna Massif. Most prominent is the emblematic Mt Machhapuchhare, whose triangular mass looms large over the town, and remains the only virgin mountain in Nepal set aside as forbidden to be climbed.

From west to east, the peaks are Annapurna South (7219m), Hiunchuli (6441m), Annapurna I (8091m), Machhapuchhare (6997m), Annapurna III (7555m), Annapurna IV (7525m) and Annapurna II (7937m).

A word of warning: the mountains can occasionally disappear behind cloud for several days, particularly during the monsoon season.

### Phewa Tal

LAKE

Phewa Tal is the travellers' focal point in Pokhara, and is the second-largest lake in Nepal. In contrast to the gaudy tourist development of Lakeside, the steep southwestern shore is densely forested and alive with birdlife. The lush Rani Ban, or Queen's Forest, bestows an emerald hue to the lake, and on a clear day, the Annapurna mountains are perfectly reflected on its mirror surface.

You can take to the lake in one of the brightly painted *doongas* (boats) available for rent at Lakeside. Many people walk or cycle around the lakeshore – the trek up to the World Peace Pagoda affords breathtaking views over the tal (lake) to the mountains beyond.

## POKHARA & THE 2015 EARTHQUAKE

Despite being just 73km from the epicenter of the earthquake on 25 April 2015, Pokhara escaped with just a few cracked walls, while Kathmandu, actually 4km further from the epicenter, was devastated. Seismologists credit Pokhara's good fortune to the ground beneath its feet – specifically, a bed of solid rock, rather than seismically vulnerable clay.

The Annapurna range also escaped serious earthquake damage and all of the trekking routes around Pokhara are fully open to trekkers, but the area is suffering a significant drop in visitor numbers because of the disaster. Local people are desperate to get the message out that Pokhara – along with its trekking routes, mountain viewpoints and rafting rivers – is open for business.

### Varahi Mandir

HINDU TEMPLE

(Map p220) Pokhara's most famous Hindu temple, the two-tiered pagoda-style Varahi Mandir stands on a small island in Phewa Tal, near the Ratna Mandir (Royal Palace). Founded in the 18th century, the temple is dedicated to Vishnu in his boar incarnation. It's been extensively renovated over the years and is inhabited by a loft of cooing pigeons. Rowboats to the temple (per person return Rs 50) leave from near the city bus stand in Lakeside.

### Old Pokhara

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

For a glimpse of what Pokhara was like before the traffic, chaos and tourist restaurants besieged the erstwhile village, head out to the old town, north of the bustling Mahendra Pul. The best way to explore is on foot.

From the Nepal Telecom building at Mahendra Pul, head north along Tersapati, passing a number of **religious shops** selling Hindu and Buddhist paraphernalia. At the intersection with Nala Mukh, check out the **Newari houses** with decorative brickwork and ornately carved wooden windows.

Continue north on Bhairab Tole to reach the small two-tiered **Bhimsen Temple** (Map p210), a 200-year-old shrine to the Newari god of trade and commerce, decorated with