

# Kathmandu to Pokhara



Before you sprint from Kathmandu to Pokhara, consider the 206km of classic Middle Hills countryside that you will pass through en route. The hills that flank the Prithvi Hwy are dotted with historic villages and ancient temples, but visitors often see nothing of this area apart from the views flashing by outside the bus windows. We strongly recommend taking at least two days for the journey between Kathmandu and Pokhara to see more of this interesting and unspoiled region.

Heading west from Kathmandu, the first interesting stop is the Manakamana Temple, steeped in history and reached by an exhilarating cable car ride from the bottom of the valley. Further west a road leads north to historic Gorkha, the birthplace of the founder of the Shah dynasty. Both Gorkha and Manakamana once lay on the trekking approach route to Pokhara and the Annapurnas.

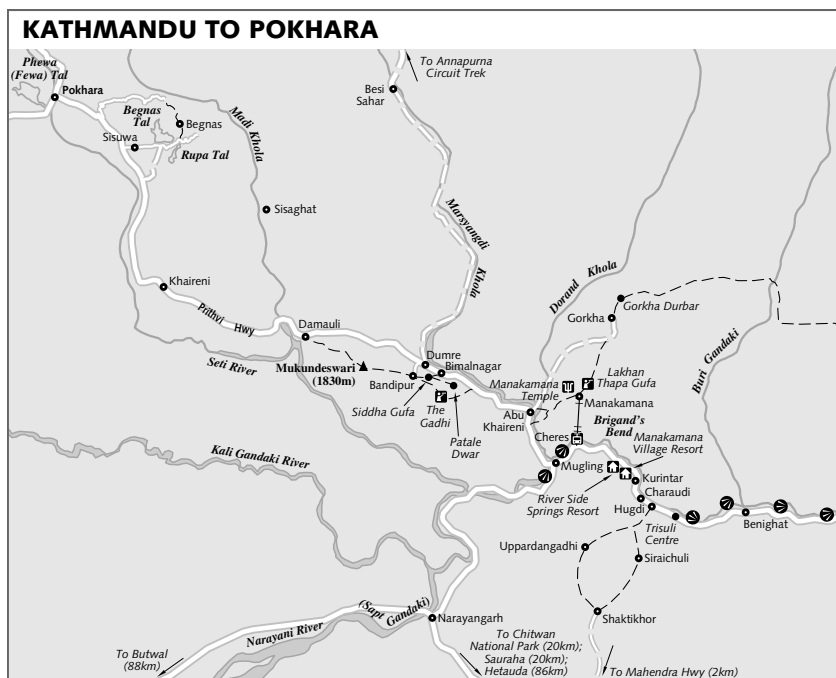
West of Gorkha, another side road winds up into the hills from Dumre to Bandipur, a living museum of Newari architecture, set in gorgeous walking country well off the beaten tourist track. Dumre is also the gateway to Besi Sahar and the eastern arm of the Annapurna Circuit. Dotted between these settlements are numerous junction towns and roadhouses where buses stop for snacks and toilet breaks.

Even if you don't stop between Kathmandu and Pokhara, the scenery along the road is dramatic. The highway dives along a series of deep river valleys, passing cascading rice terraces, rocky gorges and the roaring rapids that offer the closest white-water rafting to Kathmandu. On clear days, there are views of Machhapuchhare and the Annapurna massif most of the way to Pokhara.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Fly like a yogi on the exhilarating **Manakamana cable car** (p237)
- Walk in the footsteps of royalty at Gorkha's magnificent hilltop **Gorkha Durbar** (p239)
- Stop for a lunchtime swim at the idyllic **River Side Springs Resort** (p238) in Kurintar
- Step back in time among the Newari houses of **Bandipur** (p241), on the ancient trade route to India
- Walk to caves, viewpoints, villages and mountain shrines in the **Bandipur hills** (p243)





## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Since the 2008 elections, there have been no major problems along the Prithvi Hwy. However, bandhs (strikes) can close the road for short periods. If this happens and you need to get back to Kathmandu in a hurry, flying back in from Pokhara may be your only option.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Except on strike days, several dozen public and tourist buses and minivans run daily between Kathmandu and Pokhara, linking most of the important towns en route. The winding journey takes at least seven hours, and longer if the bus has to stop for army checkpoints.

For details of the mountain bike ride between Kathmandu and Pokhara see p98.

## KATHMANDU TO MUGLING

The Kathmandu Valley is enclosed by a towering wall of hills and escaping in any direction takes time. The main thoroughfare to Pokhara is the Prithvi Hwy, which runs

west along the gorge of the Trisuli River, passing the turn-off for Narayangarh and the Terai. For information on rafting the Trisuli, see opposite.

At **Naubise**, 29km from Kathmandu, the little-used Tribhuvan Hwy (sometimes referred to as Rajpath) branches south and makes a dramatic passage across the hills of the Mahabharat Range to the plains town of Hetauda (p306). For details of mountain biking along this route, see p97.

From Naubise, the Prithvi Hwy follows the valley of the Mahesh Khola to meet the twisting, contorting Trisuli River. Many white-water rafting companies set off from the small village of **Bhaireni**. The next big settlement is **Malekhu**, famous for its smoked river fish, which are sold from long wooden rakes on the roadside.

About 3km before Malekhu, a side road leads north to **Dhading**, a tiny cluster of stone houses on a terraced ridge overlooking the Ganesh Himalaya. The **Shreeban Nature Camp** (☎ 01-4258427; www.shreeban.com.np; outside Dhading; B&B per person per day US\$25; ☒ closed winter) offers