

Pokhara



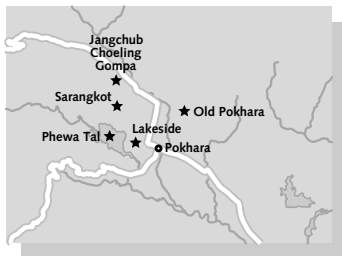
If the Himalaya are the rooftop to the world, then Pokhara has prime position on its front porch, from where it rocks away contentedly beneath the serene guard of the Annapurna mountain range. Like a chilled-out version of Thamel, Pokhara prefers to kick back in the fresh mountain air than choke on traffic fumes. Though there's more to it than a laid-back charm. It's also the gateway to the world-famous Annapurna trek. Throw in a booming adventure-sports scene, and you can see how Pokhara puts in a strong claim to the title of Nepal's premier tourist town.

In reality there are two Pokharas. First there is Lakeside, settled along the calm waters of stunning Phewa Tal. Unashamedly touristy, Lakeside has provided a sanctuary for many a weary traveller. Whether you've just returned from a three-week trek or endured a bus trip from hell, Lakeside has you in mind. It's the perfect place to recharge the batteries, with juicy steaks, lively bars and internet cafes. Secondly, there's Old Pokhara, where you'll find how life was before the hippy trail stumbled upon its pristine surrounds. With pockets of charming Newari architecture and a bustling Nepali vitality, too few tourists make the trek out here.

When you're done lazing by the lake, find the time to actually get out there with a leisurely row on its sparkling waters. Or if you feel you're becoming too relaxed, get the heart pumping with the undisputed best views in town via a tandem paraglide flight. White-water rafting, microlight flights, or roaring through the countryside on a classic Enfield motorbike – there's plenty here to keep you busy.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Witness nature's ethereal lightshow as the sun rises over the Annapurna range from **Sarangkot** (p272) turning its peaks from pink to gold
- Row out to the middle of peaceful **Phewa Tal** (p257) to experience an unbelievable calm
- Literally soar like a bird of prey, as you follow your aviator guides into the thermals while **parahawking** (p261)
- Escape the tourist trap of Lakeside to see what's going on in the real Nepal at **Old Pokhara** (p257)
- Celebrate your trekking triumph with a huge steak and a cold beer at one of Lakeside's multicultural **restaurants** (p267)
- Be mesmerised by the sounds of chanting Tibetan monks in the atmospheric **Jangchub Choeling Gompa** (p259)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 061

■ POPULATION: 200,000

■ ELEVATION: 884M

