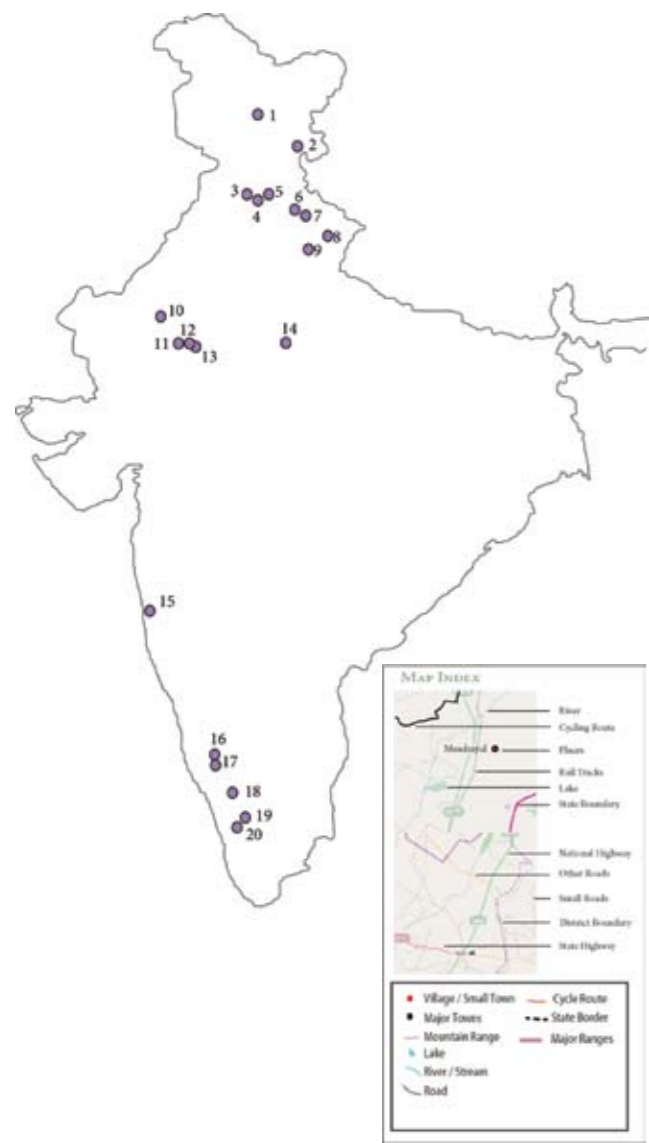


# 20 BEST CYCLE RIDES

Rediscover the same road on different wheels. Slow the world down to see it and absorb most of it.

TEXT, MAPS & PHOTOS: DEPI CHAUDHRY



**Cycle mechanics and spares:** It is important to know your cycle mechanics. The local cycle shops have never seen gear cycles and do not have much idea about repairs.

**Safety Concerns:** India is generally a safe place for tourists. However, we recommend that you do not cycle alone in remote areas or after dark.

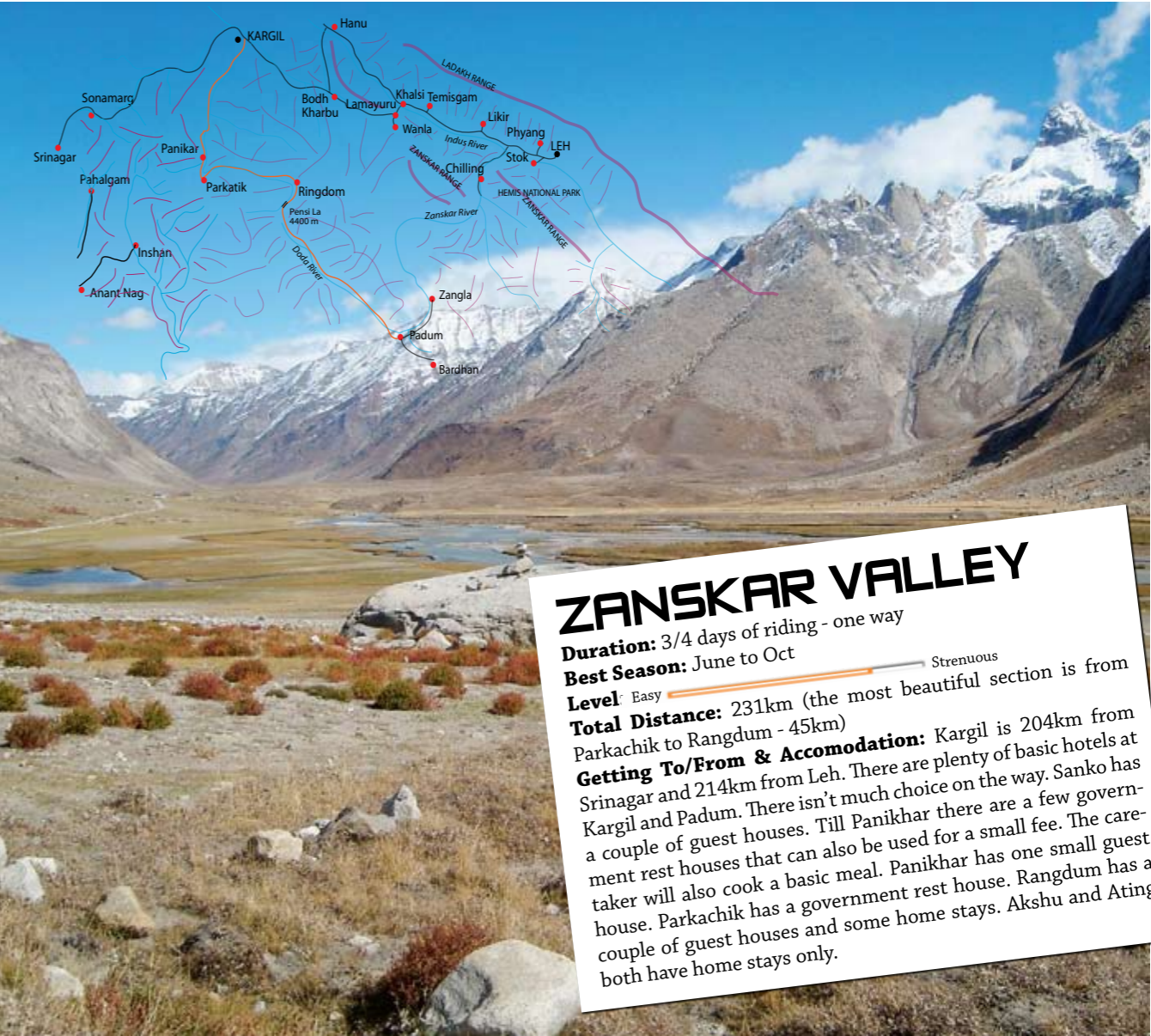
**Road signs/maps:** There are virtually no road signs in India. Maps do help. (Map Source - Open Street Map and Open Cycle Map used under the CC-BY-SA 2.0 licence). Else, carry a GPS with pre-loaded maps. In some remote areas mobiles may not work.

**Eating places:** Although India has lots of eating places on the road sides, in rural parts it's difficult even to buy bottled water. Bananas are considered the poor man's fruit and one can find them in most villages.

**Grade:** Is based on an average cyclist who would be cycling about 100km per week.

**Duration:** This could vary from person to person. We have assumed an average speed of 15km per hour buffering time for water breaks and photo opportunities.

**Ride / Route:** The hardcore dirt mountain trails have not been considered in our selection.



## ZANSKAR VALLEY

**Duration:** 3/4 days of riding - one way

**Best Season:** June to Oct

**Level:** Easy Strenuous

**Total Distance:** 231km (the most beautiful section is from Parkachik to Rangdum - 45km)

**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Kargil is 204km from Srinagar and 214km from Leh. There are plenty of basic hotels at Kargil and Padum. There isn't much choice on the way. Sanko has a couple of guest houses. Till Panikhar there are a few government rest houses that can also be used for a small fee. The caretaker will also cook a basic meal. Panikhar has one small guest house. Parkachik has a government rest house. Rangdum has a couple of guest houses and some home stays. Akshu and Ating both have home stays only.

**The Ride:** This is the remotest corner of the Himalayas in India. The area is completely cut off for eight months of the year. From Kargil the road follows the Suru River on its left. There are lots of small villages on the way. As you leave Kargil, the area is fairly green with apricot orchards and fields in the valley. As the road keep progressing towards Padun it get more arid and dry. The only green is seen in small patches near the villages and the villages are also located near side streams coming down from the mountains. The valley is very wide till short of Parkachik. At this point the valley narrows and the road climbs up steeply crossing the Suru River.

Once over the small pass, the valley once again widens. The blue Parkachik glacier coming down from Nun Kun can be seen across the river. The road flattens out in the valley and the views get better with the mighty mountains around and stunning

colours. At the end of the valley the Ringdom Gompa can be seen on a small hill in the wide open valley. From here the road climbs up steeply to the pass and the Darung Drung glacier on the right is a magnificent sight. On the other side of the pass we follow the wide valley with the Doda river to the right till Padum. There are no permits required, just an entry at the check post.

**Kargil (2679m) - 0km**

**Sanko (3000m) - 34km**

**Panikhar (3147m) - 62km (check post)**

**Parkachik (3600m) - 87km**

**Ringdom (4000m) - 132km**

**Pensi La (4300m) - 147km**

**Akshu (3750m) - 178km (check post)**

**Ating (3550m) - 200km**

**Padum (3000m) - 231km.**

IN FOCUS 20 BEST RIDES

UPSHI - TSO MORIRI

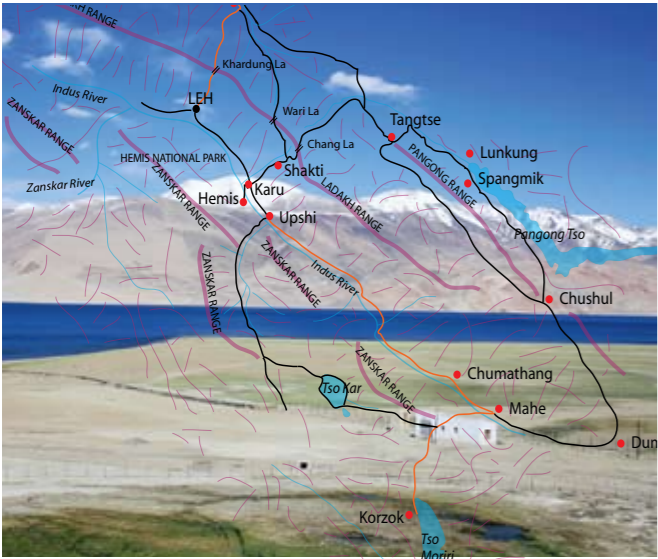
**Duration:** 2 days of riding - one way

**Best Season:** June to Oct

**Level:** Easy  Strenuous

**Total Distance:** 162km (the most beautiful section is from Chumathang to Korzok - 72km)

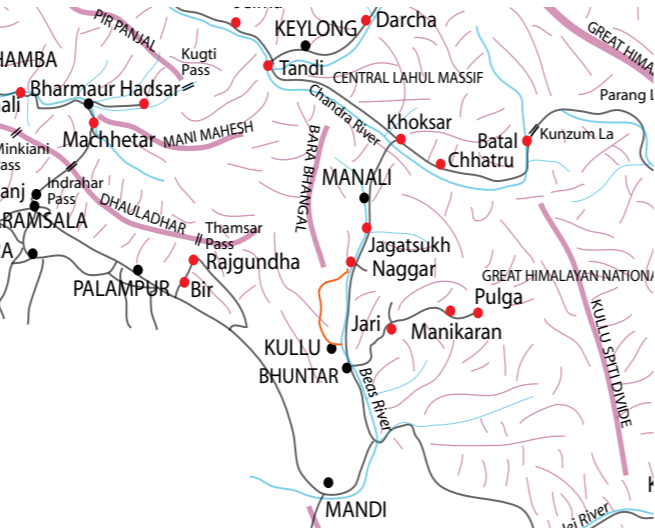
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Upshi is 47km from Leh. Upshi has some very basic hotels and Korzok has two basic hotels, home stays and a few tented camps. In between there are plenty of home stays and tea shops that are used as over-night halts.



**The Ride:** The road follows the Indus River leaving the Manali road on the right. There is a check post just after leaving Upshi. The valley narrows down and the mountains get a little more rugged. There are a few small villages located on the banks of the river. The green fields and the willow trees are very soothing to the eye. The road surface is fairly good and level. Chumathang is a small settlement near the hot springs. The village is located on the banks of the river with a few shops on the road. There is a small border road establishment near the village. The village has a few home stays. The road is fairly gradual till Mahe. At Mahe there is a check post. Just after the bridge, the road leaves the Indus River and starts climbing up the small valley to Sumdo. Just after Sumdo there is a small road to the right going to another salt lake - Tso Kar. The climb up to the twin passes is fairly easy. From Namshag the view towards Tazang Tso is truly beautiful, with the lake. Often you will find nomads camping here grazing their cattle. The road after Tazang Tso turns into a hard gravel surface following the stream leading to Tso Kar. Korzok is a small village in the Rupshu valley located on the banks of Tso Moriri. It was mainly home to nomads. There is a beautiful monastery in the middle of the village. The beautiful lake is 19km long and 4km wide. The wetlands attract a lot of migratory birds in the summer and is a protected site. The lake is brackish and does not have any life in it.

**Upshi (3389m) - Chumathang (4000m) - 90km**  
**Chumathang - Korzok (4535m) - 72km**

NAGGAR - SHIRAD - KULLU



**Duration:** 5 hours of easy riding

**Best Season:** April to Nov (Avoid the monsoon)

**Level:** Easy  Strenuous

**Total Distance:** 46km

**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Naggar is 20km short of Manali in the Kullu Valley. We recommend staying at the Johnson Orchard at Raison village.

**The Ride:** It is a beautiful ride in the lush green Himalayas with snowclad peaks around. The road starts from the end of Raison village climbing up steadily through apple orchards. The valley looks very impressive as we climb higher. It starts at 1400 metres and climbs up to 2200 metres in 17km. It a gradual steady climb. There are only a couple of spots where the gradient is steep. One does not feel the climb as the views are great with the green valley below with the Beas River and the snow-capped Greater Himalaya to the north. There are couple of small villages on the road. Once the road reaches the highest point, it kind of levels out descending gently for the next 7km before descending to the Kullu valley. There is a lovely ancient temple on the way down to Kullu. The road meets the main Manali road near the Gamon bridge at Kullu town.

JALORI PASS

**Duration:** 4 hours of easy riding

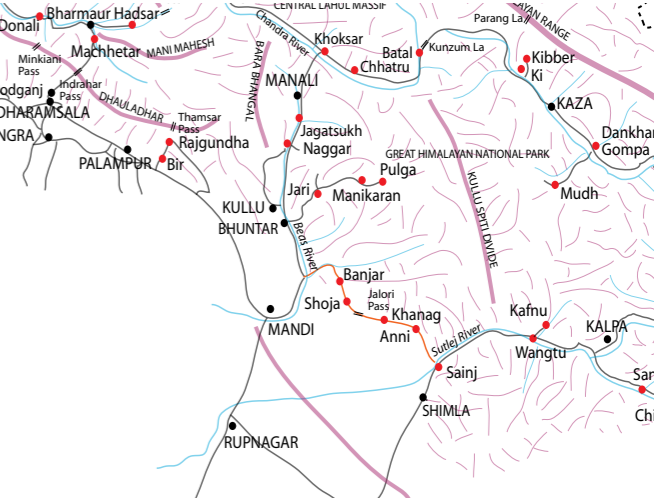
**Best Season:** April to Nov (Avoid the monsoon)

**Level:** Easy  Strenuous

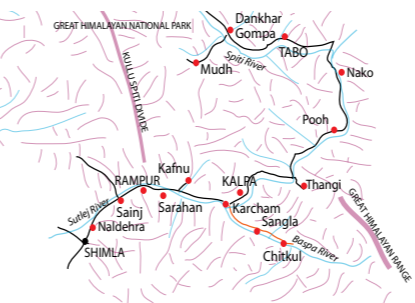
**Total Distance:** 36km (Aani to Shoja), Shoja to Banjar - 16km

**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Aani is 105km from Shimla. There are a couple of basic hotels at Aani. Khanag has a forest rest house. However, the better accomodation is at Shoja - Banjara Camps and if you get to Banjar you could take the deviation to Thirthan valley - Himalayan Trout House

**The Ride:** Jalori Pass is one of the remote passes that connect the Sutluj Valley and the Beas Valley. The road crosses the Sutluj River at Luhri and goes along the Sutluj River on its true right. Short of Aani the road leaves the Sutluj and follows a side stream to Aani. From here onwards the road gets very interesting climbing up through the apple orchards and some small villages. As we climb higher the vegetation changes from pine to fir to oak. There are some lovely grazing pastures in this area. The road from Aani climbs up gradually for the next 25km to Khanag gaining almost 2000 metres. For the next 5km the road is fairly steep gaining around 700 metres to the pass (3140m). It is a beautiful road through some of finest forests in the region. The northern view from the pass is fabulous with the Dhauladar range and the Great Himalaya range visible. The forest cover of the Deodars is beautiful. The road gets better as we descend towards Banjar.



BASPA VALLEY



**Duration:** 5 hours of easy riding

**Best Season:** April to Nov

**Level:** Easy  Strenuous

**Total Distance:** 58km (Karcham to Chitkul and back to Batseri Village)


**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Karcham is 177km from Shimla. There are no hotels at Karcham and only a few home stays at the village. The Baspa valley has many options, however the best place is Banjara Camp at Village Batseri (between Sangla and Chitkul).

**The Ride:** This is a beautiful ride in the Baspa valley. The road from Karcham to the valley has been carved out of the hill cliff. It is a sheer drop on the right side of the road. It may be scary in a car but feels very safe on cycles. It is a nice rewarding uphill climb for 22km to the head of the valley gaining 1000 metres to reach an elevation of 2850 metres. From here onwards the road levels out making it much easier. The valley is very wide with the beautiful Baspa river running through it. The valley is filled with apple orchards. Early in the season these fields are filled with the white flowers of the apple bloom. The views are spectacular from Chitkul. The mountains are hidden and can't be seen till the last couple of km to Chitkul. There are some basic hotels at Chitkul. If you are looking for comfort, you may have to trace your route downhill to Batseri.

IN FOCUS 20 BEST RIDES

CHANSHAL PASS

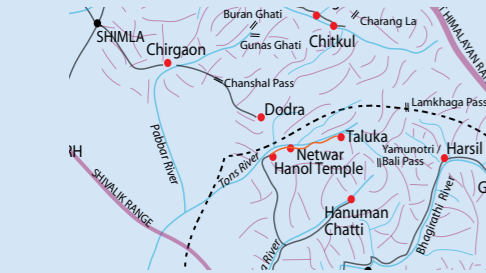



**Duration:** 4 hrs to the pass and 7 hrs to Kwar of easy riding  
**Best Season:** May to Oct (avoid the monsoon)  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 35km to the pass and 76km to Dodra Kwar. Could add another 20km of cycling towards Pabbar valley till Janglik.

**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Chanshal Pass is 180km from Shimla. There are no places to stay except for the Forest rest house at Chirgaon (Tikri). On the Dodra Kwar side there is no accomodation at all but one could stay in a village home.

**The Ride:** Chanshal pass is located in the most remote corner of Shimla district. Till a few years ago the villages of Dodra and Kwar were cut off and there was no road to the valley. Access to this area is via Rohru. From the forest rest house at Chirgaon, follow the road along the Pabbar river to the Chansal turn (11 km). From here the road climbs steadily through the apple orchards, from 1950 metres – 3750 metres in 30km. The trail goes past a few small villages, Shela Desh and Larote. A little beyond Larote there is no asphalt surface on the road. The views keep getting better as one climbs up. The view towards Pabbar Valley is also beautiful. The road winds up through the beautiful deodar forest. There is a forest rest house at Larote and the village has some dhabas also. The views from the meadows at the pass are beautiful with some snow-capped peaks around. From the pass it is a lovely 40km downhill ride to Kwar village. This entire section is not metaled. For those interested in adding a little more of a ride, the road leading to Janglik is also beautiful. The road follows the Pabbar river climbing steadily from 1950 metres to 2700 metres in 20km. The last 5km of the road is a non-metal surface. The views are fantastic on this road. Janglik is the last road head in the Pabbar Valley.

TONS VALLEY



**Duration:** 5 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** All year (avoid the monsoon)  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 49km


**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Hanol is 175km from Dehradun. There are not many options at Hanol except for GMVN guest house. Taluka is a small village used as the road head for the trek to Har Ki Dun.

**The Ride:** Tons Valley is also very beautiful. It has got some spectacular forest in the area. The tallest pine tree in India existed here and when it fell in a storm, a memorial was built for it. The ride is a 1000-metre climb in 49km going from 1100 metres to 2100 metres. The road runs flat in the valley along the Tons river with beautiful pine trees. For the first 20km the road is fairly flat gaining very little altitude. Just short of Netwar the road starts to climb. Netwar has a forest rest house located close to the forest check post. There is a small entry fee to this area because of Goving National park. It starts to gain altitude leaving the river bed far below. There is a road going towards the river. This road goes to Dola and then a walking trail to Dodra and Kwar. Follow the road going to Sankri and onward to Taluka. It is a beautiful road through beautiful forest and occasional fields. At Sankri the road descends a little before gaining altitude to Taluka. Taluka is the last road head and also the starting point for Har Ki Dun trek. The last bit of the road is not paved.



BHIMTAL - ITEMENAAAN ESTATE



**Duration:** 7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** All year (avoid the monsoon)  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 87km

**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** The nearest rail head is Kathgodam and by road Bhimtal is 295km from Delhi. Bhimtal has plenty of accomodation. Country Inn is one of the nicer places. Itemenaan is the only place to stay at Chalnichhina.


**The Ride:** Kumaon in Uttarakhand is an extremely charming place to explore – magnificent views of the Himalayan peaks, amazingly located hamlets, friendly local people, all combining to provide a great cycling opportunity in the region. Start your trip right after Bhimtal when you leave the busy road and start cycling down towards Padampuri. Starting in the hill shadows through farmlands a river flows through the middle to Padam-



puri town. Cross the small bridge and start to climb through forests of oak, pine and rhododendron to tiny hamlets. You reach the top near Dhanachuli amidst fruit orchards with stunning views of the snow-capped mountains. After Dhanachuli, the traffic on the road further thins down as you start descending towards Paharpani and Shehar Phatak. From Shehar Phatak we start riding towards Lamgada and the traffic reduces to a trickle – leaving the entire road to yourself. On this stretch you see some of the finest oak forests in the region.

KOTOWAR TO MARCHULA



**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** All year (avoid the monsoon)  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 118km


**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Kotowar is 204km from Delhi and 110km from Dehra Dun. There are many basic hotels in the small town. Marchula has many resorts located along the Ramganga River.

**The Ride:** It's a great ride going past some remote villages, forest in the foothills and yet getting a chance to see snow-capped mountains. From Kotowar it's a winding road with forests on both sides with a gentle up hill climb going past the Durga Devi temple to Dugadda (12km). At Dugadda town turn towards Nani Danda. Carry on uphill on the mountain road for another 6km, 500 metres in total. From here the road descends for 25km going past Sendikhal, Dantiyal till the forest gate at Vatan Basa. Nice vegetation on both sides, Sal trees, terraced fields, small villages. From here the road climbs through the forest for 6km before descending 5km to Rathudab. From Maidawan we start our long uphill climb of 20km gaining 1200 metres till Nanidanda. You will also find the landscape changing on this route as you start gaining elevation and see some pine trees as well. You may also get your first glimpse of the snow-clad mountains of the Indian Himalayas.

IN FOCUS 20 BEST RIDES


KHICHAN - JAMBHA



**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 116km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Keechan is just a few km from Phalodi which is 170km from Jaisalmer. Lal Niwas at Pha-lodi is the best accomodation in the region.

**The Ride:** Khichan is also known as the Demoiselle Crane village by bird lovers. The birds visit this area every year between Sep-tember to March in the thousands. It is a fantastic sight to watch so many cranes and they are protected by the villagers. Start the ride from Phalodi visiting Khichan to see the amazing site where the birds (locally known as Kurja) feed. It’s literally an unbeliev-able sight. From Khichan go past the village for about 10km and take the road going left to Jambha. Though a single-track road the road condition is great for cycling. From Jamba cycle towards Chaku and turn left (look out for the mobile tower at Chaku). It is a beautiful area to cycle through the desert going past sand dunes and some Bishoni villages and dhanis, which are circular houses made up of mud and cow dung. It’s a great circular ride in the desert but the experience is incomplete without spending a night in the desert in a tent. The terrain is absolutely flat with a fantastic road surface and no traffic.

KUMBALGARH - RANAKPUR


**Duration:** 3 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 52km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Kumbalgarh is 100km from Udaipur and 180km from Jodhpur. Aodhi Hotel at Kum-balgarh and The Mountbatten Lodge at Ranakpur are amongst the finest places to stay.



**The Ride:** It is a lovely ride in the Aravali hills. This area is very interesting with lots of small lakes and lush green fields. There is a lot of rain water harvesting in this area and it’s nice to see sug-ar cane fields in the middle of arid hills. The bulls going round and round turn the Pelton wheel buckets of an ancient irrigation system. The road surface is also fantastic. For the first 30km the road goes past villages and fields on the Aravali plateau. The road only descends 200 metres in 30km. During the last 17km the road actually descends steeply through the forest to Ranakpur. Kumbalgarh is located at an elevation of 1088 metres and Ranak-pur at 438 metres.

DEOGARH - PHULAD - TRAIN




**Duration:** 4 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 70km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Deogarh is 135km from Udaipur and 142km from Jodhpur. Deogarh Mahal is one of the finest heritage hotels in Rajasthan.

**The Ride:** From Deogarh follow the small beautiful road through the rocky countryside to Kuanthal and Aasan (20km). From Aasan we turn off to Dewair (37km) on national highway no 8. This whole area is beautiful with many hidden lakes. We gain about 130 metres on our way to Dewair. Cross the highway and descend the Aravali hills through forest for 18km losing over 400 metres. It’s a spectacular downhill ride. At Nagagaon, we turn right for Phulad. From here onwards it is a flat road all the way to Phulad going through villages. One could carry a picnic lunch and enjoy it in the forest or could plan to have lunch at Rawla Jojawar on the way to Phulad. The train ride up the ghats is beautiful with the Phulad reservoir in the valley. The train stops at Goram Ghat which is famous for its langurs. The locals pray to them and feed them. When the train arrives they gather in the hundreds and climb the train. Fortunately they are friend-ly enough. The train ride is 26km and climbs up 310 metres. The spectacular train ride ends at Kambli Ghat station. The movie - ‘The Man Who Would be King’ was partly shot on this train. Deogarh Mahal is 5km from Kambli Ghat station.

DEOGARH - KUMBALGARH



**Duration:** 6 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 85km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Deogarh is 135km from Udaipur and 142km from Jodhpur. Deogarh Mahal is one of the finest heritage hotels in Rajasthan. There are many options at Kumbalgarh. Aodhi Hotel is amongst the nicer ones.



**The Ride:** From Deogarh follow the small beautiful road through the rocky countryside to Kuanthal and Aasan (20km). From Aasan follow the road towards Dewair and about half way to De-wair take the left turn for Kitela. It’s a very small road through the beautiful rocky countryside. Kitela is a small village on national highway no 8. From Kitela we take the scenic route to Charbhujia. This 22km section passes through some small inter-esting villages in the Aravali ranges. Unlike most parts of Rajas-than this area is nice and green with lots of activity on the farms. There are lots of interesting up and downs till Charbhujia. From here it is a gradual uphill for the next 27km to Kumbalgarh gain-ing 250 metres. The road goes past a few small lakes formed by harvesting rain water. Parts of the majestic fort can be seen from a distance on the hilltop.

IN FOCUS 20 BEST RIDES

KARAULI - CHAMBAL



**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon (avoid the festival dates at Kila Devi Temple)  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 118km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Karauli is about 180km from Jaipur and 290km from Delhi. There are not many options in Karauli. Bhawar Villas Palace is the best possible option. Itemenaan is the only place to stay at Chalnichhina.  
**The Ride:** It is a lovely short ride through some remote villages. It is one of the places in India where one can cycle through a sanctuary. From, Karauli cycle towards Gangapur. Once you leave this road and head towards the sanctuary there is virtually



no traffic. It's a single road with a fantastic surface. The small ups and downs are interesting. There are high chances of seeing blue bulls and the deer family. Attempt an early start to catch the wildlife. The sanctuary comes to an abrupt end with a cliff overlooking the Chambal valley. It is a fantastic site. Descend the hairpin bends down to the valley. All of a sudden you are in the lush green valley with fields and the Chambal river. The road goes through the amazing structures of Chambal ravines. There are some very remote villages in this area.

MURUD - RATNAGIRI



**Duration:** 8 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and Monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 133km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Murud is 140km from Mumbai. There are plenty of hotels in Murud and the Silver Sand Beach Resort is amongst the better hotels. Ratnagiri also has many hotels, however. Hotel Sea Rock and Kohinoor Samudra are the better options.

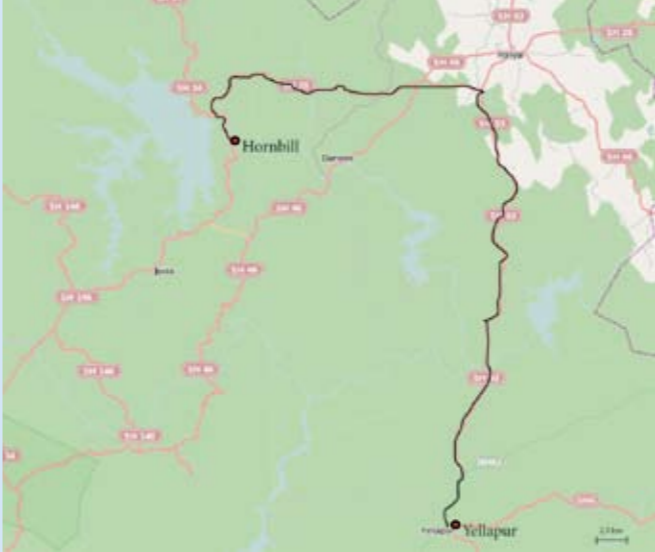
**The Ride:** This is a great coastal ride. From Murud beach head up to the town of Dapoli. It's a great uphill ride on a wide road to Dapoli, climbing 200 metres in 10km. From Dapoli the road descends for the next 30km to sea level at Dabhol. The road goes through coastal forest. Take the ferry across the creek and cycle to Guhagar beach. There are minor ups and downs going past

Ratnagiri Gas and Power Ltd. It's a beautiful road where you keep getting an occasional view of the sea and then it descends to a beach every few km. Descend to the Jaigad ferry and cross the creek on the jetty. From here onwards the road is far closer to the sea. The sea is blue and clean. There are lots of resorts on the way to Ganapati Pule. This section is the most beautiful on the entire ride. The road to Ratanagiri is also beautiful, running along the coast. The Maharashtra coastal belt is probably the most beautiful and interesting coastline in India.



KHANAPUR - DANDELI

**Duration:** 4 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and Monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 60km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Khanapur is about 45km south of Belgaum. The Hermitage Guest House is a lovely place located just outside Khanapur. Hornbill River Resort in Dandeli is amongst the better hotels.  
**The Ride:** The Hermitage Guest House is a lovely eco friendly place located just outside Khanapur. Hermitage is located at the edge of the Kali River Basin forest. We head towards a small railway station in the forest called Gunji and turn right on the road heading towards Ramnagar. It's a lovely road going through sal forest, though a little damaged in the last monsoon. It's a fairly dense forest so the chances of seeing wildlife are not very high. It's a rolling road with gentle slopes fluctuating between 650 and 720 metres for the first 42km. The road goes past Londa railway junction to a crossing at Ramnagar. From here we take the beautiful state highway to Dandeli. After the 42nd km mark, the road descends all the way down to Dandeli (450 metres). At some parts of the road the large beautiful Supa Dam Reservoir surrounded by hills and forest can be seen. From Ganeshagudi descend towards the river for Hornbill.



DANDELI - YELLAPUR

**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and Monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 78km  
**Getting To/From & Accomodation:** Yellapur is 65km from Hubli. Banana Country Resort is one of the few places to stay at Yellapur.  
**The Ride:** Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary was designated as a tiger reserve in 2007. It has unique ecological system with the Kali River basin. The Kali river is also famous for its Virnoli Rapids and rafting is a common past time here. We leave the Supa Dam Reservoir heading east till the border of the sanctuary. For the first 30km the road goes through rolling hills of lovely forest but gaining altitude marginally. Dandeli is located at an elevation of 480 metres and we reach an elevation of 580 metres. The road once again enters the forest heading south going past Tatihalla Dam. The road descends down for the next 16 km to an elevation of 420 metres. It is a lovely ride through thick forest and a network of rivers. The chances of seeing wildlife are fairly high on these routes. The road then gradually climbs up through the forest for the next 10km to reach an elevation of 580 metres. We then cross the forest to enter the small town of Yellapur.

IN FOCUS 20 BEST RIDES

MADIKERI - KABINI



**Duration:** 6 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 113km  
**Getting To/From & Accommodation:** Madikeri is 115km from Mysore. Both Madikeri and Kabini have lots of hotels to choose from. The Bison Resort at Kabini is our pick.  
**The Ride:** Coorg is again a very beautiful part of South India. Till 1956, Coorg was a separate state and its capital was Madikeri. In 1956 it was brought under Mysore State and became a district. We leave Madikeri heading south east descending a




couple of hundred metres through beautiful coffee plantations for 10km to Chettalli. There are not many tea plantations in this area as Madikeri is located at a height of 1167 metres which is more conducive for coffee. From Chettalli onwards the road goes past rolling hills of coffee plantations maintaining an elevation between 850 and 950 metres for the next 33km till Gonikoppal, going past Siddapura. At Siddapura one can take a deviation to visit the Dubare Elephant Camp on the banks of the Kaveri River. At Gonikoppal, we leave the road and head east on the Tithimathi - Konnankatte road heading towards Nagarhole National Park. The coffee estates end, making way for the forest before joining up with the Nagarhole road and descend down the last 30km to Kabini Reservoir. This area is very rich in wild life.

MUNNAR - POLLACHI




**The Ride:** This area is so beautiful, one feels sad leaving. We leave Munnar heading north gaining 380 metres in 11km to reach the highest point on the ride at 1880 metres. It's a lovely ride going through lots of tea plantations. From the highest point we start riding downhill for the next 50km. It's a gradual slope with no hairpin bends. The road goes through this valley with lots of tea estates and hills with forest on either side. This is the Eravikulam National Park. It is one of the most beautiful parts in Southern India. The road goes past a small settlement at Gundumalai and Marayoor Town. The tea gardens finish short of Marayoor town and the road goes through a lovely forest. This area is very rich in wildlife and known for its elephants. From here onwards the road is fairly flat.

**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 113km  
**Getting To/From & Accommodation:** Munnar is 127km from Cochin and 156km from Coimbatore. The better places to stay are Windermere Estate in Munnar and Shembaka Vilasa in Pollachi for accommodation.



POLLACHI - ATHIRAPALLY



**Duration:** 6-7 hours of easy riding  
**Best Season:** November–March and monsoon  
**Level:** Easy  Strenuous  
**Total Distance:** 124km  
**Getting To/From & Accommodation:** Pollachi is 40km from Coimbatore and 170km from Cochin. There are a few options at Athirapally. 'Rainforest' is one of the finer places to stay.  
**The Ride:** It is a beautiful ride through the forest, hills, tea plantations with lots of reservoirs. The first 25km of the ride is fairly flat through green fields and the Sholayar hills in the front. We enter the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu. The climb starts from Aliyar reservoir going through 40 hairpin bends in 23km and gaining 1200 metres till Iyerpad (1475m). Forest gives way to tea plantations as we gain altitude. The uphill ride is well worth the views at the top and the hard work is over. The area is rich in wildlife and elephants have been known to come strolling into the tea gardens. Valprai is a beautiful small hill station surrounded by tea estates. A little after the town we cross the Kerala border and enter the Sholayar Reserve Forest with the beautiful Sholayar reservoir. The area is beautiful with lots of reservoirs and green carpet tea plantations. From Valprai the road descends down for the next 70km to the waterfalls at Athirappilly, losing 1200 metres. There are no hairpin bends descending; it's a gentle, gradual descent through some beautiful forest. The road goes past Ponngalkuthu Reservoir and the Chakkudy River.

