



Nepal

Himalayan mountain biking

*The Annapurna Circuit is mostly tackled by backpackers but you can do it by bike, as **Dr Gary Hill** and four friends discovered*

We arrived in Kathmandu in October 2024, aiming to conquer Nepal's iconic Annapurna Circuit Trek (ACT). A Nepali friend living in the UK had helped us out by introducing us to his nephew, Sagar Dulal, of Freewheel Adventure Nepal. A minibus transported us and our bikes to Pokhara, a bumpy six-hour journey.

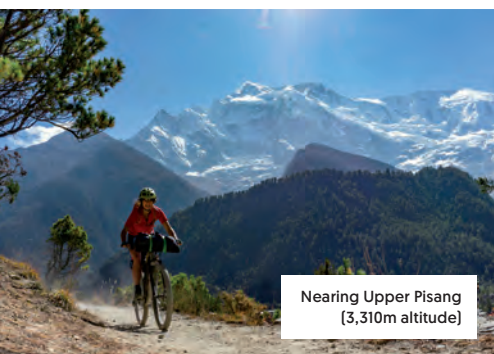
The circuit, which rewards you with jaw-dropping views of snow-covered mountains from day three onwards, takes backpackers an average of 21 days to complete. It took us 12 days on our bikes, riding around 30km a day – which was hard work on such rugged terrain. We were able to carry our own kit in small backpacks. We had warm accommodation and hot meals throughout the circuit, so had no need for the usual bikepacking gear.



Our main worry wasn't completing the distance, as we are all regular and fit cyclists, but how we'd cope with the altitude. Sure enough, we were out of breath climbing the hotel stairs on the first day. But through careful planning, including a two-day base at Manang (3,540m), we were able to ride high and return to sleep low. We all managed to cross the Thorong La pass, the highest point on the circuit at 5,416m!

The ACT has a variety of routes. You can take 'easy' jeep tracks or 1,000m or longer technical descents with tight switchbacks, stairs and drops! The choice is yours and is easy to coordinate with local guides, who can plan a route to suit all cyclists.

It's one of the best places to ride a mountain bike in the world. Don't be put off by fears of where to go or the altitude or weather. The conditions in autumn were excellent.



Buckinghamshire

Pedal pushing

Bruce Alexander joined a mass ride in Haddenham to show the demand for cycling infrastructure

LAST SUMMER 400 cyclists gathered in the village of Haddenham in Buckinghamshire. Their dream was to be able to cycle to Thame, three miles away. Many have friends there or want to visit the town for its shops and other facilities. There are similar dreamers in Thame who yearn to cycle to Haddenham. Apart from anything else, the two places share a railway station: Haddenham-Thame Parkway. At the moment, all any resident can do is dream on.

The A418 between the two places is just too dangerous. Occasionally a cyclist will try it. Vehicles queue up behind such a reckless loner. In spite of the Highway Code recommendation to leave 1.5 metres between car and bike, and the lack of such space for this on the A418 when it's busy, some drivers insist on overtaking and passing much too close. Others sit on their horns.

This was why 400 cyclists went for a gentle ride round Haddenham village: to show the demand for a segregated cycling and walking route. It was organised by Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group. The spirit was great. Cyclists aged from three to 90 took part. Families did it. Councillors and parliamentary candidates turned out.

The mood was almost celebratory. What a great feeling of cycling togetherness! But

really there isn't anything to celebrate – yet. Locals have been campaigning for more than 25 years for a greenway between the two places. Cyclists are and need to be patient people!

The campaign continues

We need
Thame Greenway Haddenham