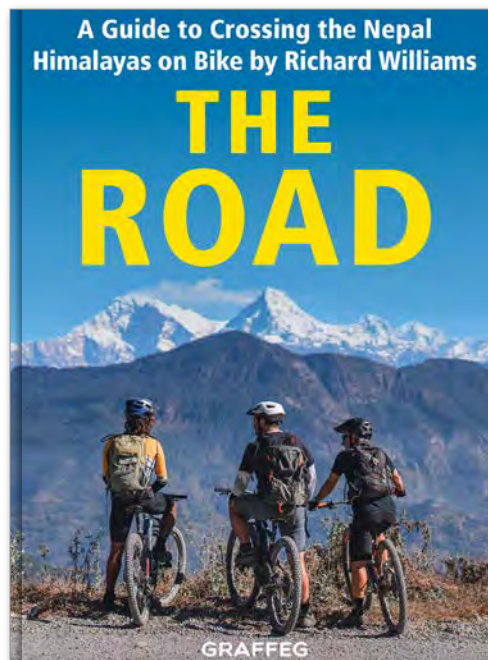


The Road

Richard Williams. Publication 30 May 2024. £16.99.

Part guidebook, part travelogue but definitely all adventure, join author Richard Williams and photographer Manish Maharja as they cross the Nepalese Himalayas on a mountain bike.



About the author:

Richard Williams was raised on a farm in north Pembrokeshire and lived for a number of years in Sydney, Australia, in his early twenties. Later, following a degree and master's degree in Development Studies from Exeter University and LSE respectively, Richard worked as a technical writer at the newly-created Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Author Richard Williams
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Content:

Part guidebook, part travelogue but definitely all adventure, join author Richard Williams and photographer Manish Maharjan as they cross the Nepalese Himalayas on a mountain bike.

Originally from Pembrokeshire, but now resident in Switzerland, Richard details this most remarkable of journeys through some of the most stunning and remote landscapes and environments the world has to offer.

Along with the remarkable textual and photographic account, the book also contains maps, details about accommodation, places of interest and plenty of other information you might need if you fancy undertaking the journey yourself.

Take The Road and embark on a once-in-a-lifetime experience that you will never, ever forget.

With foreword by Christoph Sauser

Key themes:

- Travel
- Mountain biking
- Nepal

Selling Points:

- Richard Williams documents a unique journey mountain biking through the Himalayas.
- Serving as both a detailed travel guide and a fascinating personal account of the experience, Richard provides all the in-depth insight needed to make your own trip.
- Photo-illustrated throughout, the book is complemented by maps and diagrams detailing the route and the many highlights.
- Foreword by Christoph Sauser (Olympic medalist, 4 x World Champion, 5 x Cape Epic winner)

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Once in a Lifetime Adventure

This is a guidebook for anyone who enjoys riding a bike and is looking for a once in a lifetime adventure. It is a guide for cycling across the Himalayan mountains of Nepal.

It is not a guide for an extreme mountain biking journey up amongst the snow-capped 8000m

high Himalayan peaks, but an achievable way to weave across the entire country through an old mountain trading route that is now being developed into the Mid Hills High Road through the Middle Himalayan Range, which stretches all the way across the breadth of the country of Nepal from west to east.

Along The Road you will encounter rural Nepali life unchanged for hundreds of years as you traverse exotic valleys locked away in a remote and mountainous lands that time forgot. You will stop for endless cups of chai, plates of dhal bhat and bowls of noodle soup as you share a moment in a small village with a contented community that will be as intrigued by you as you will be by them. Learn a few words, try and understand regional customs and courtesies. You will get blisters,

chapped lips, sore legs, aching joints and no doubt some sunburn, but the joy you will feel pedalling into a remote Nepali village as sundown to a warm fire, a hot dinner and big encouraging smiles will make those pains dissipate in a heartbeat as you build your body up again with food and rest for the following day's adventure. And that is what The Road is – an adventure, an experience of a lifetime through the heart of one of planet Earth's most spectacular natural arenas.



NEPAL A Brief Overview

Nepal is a mountainous landlocked country in south Asia, bordered by India and China. Much of the country is located in the Himalayan mountain range, with eight of the ten highest mountains in the world, including the world's highest mountain – Mount Everest (8848m). The country occupies 88,020sqm and has a population of just over 30 million at the time of publication. The country has a traditional economic system whereby three quarters of the population still engage in subsistence farming activities.

There is huge ethnic diversity in Nepal. In the lower valley regions around Kathmandu and Pokhara reside predominantly Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman speaking people. In the Himalayan highlands live predominantly ethnic Mongoloid people, speaking Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman languages, including the legendary Sherpa people. The southern section of the country along the low lying and fertile flatlands of the Terai region lives a significant percentage of the country's population, mainly of Indo-Aryan descent. For more information on the different ethnic and regional groups of Nepal see page 41.



Nepal has a rich history dating back to the 8th or 7th century BC, with the arrival of the Kirati people from the east. Later, in the late 6th Century BC, the philosophy of Buddhism was conceived in Lumbini, Nepal, by Siddhartha Gautama – the "Buddha," and spread throughout the country. By around 200AD, Hinduism had largely supplanted Buddhism and continued to dominate the country through various Hindu dynasties and kingdoms over subsequent centuries.



seemed so exotic and spiritual, it was hard not to get swept up with the spirit of the gathering. The vibrant colours of yellow, red and orange, so synonymous with Hindu culture, made the festival seem so bright and alive. The exquisite flower arrangements and garlands as well, showing the love and dedication of the people to their religious beliefs. There were various sage-like figures dotted in and around the temple grounds who were giving blessings for a small donation. We were soon covered in red and yellow dust that fell from our foreheads onto our clothes as we wandered around. The

atmosphere of life, colour, faith and positivity that we stumbled on by chance on this morning made us realise very quickly that the gates of Ugatara Temple were the perfect starting point for the long and difficult journey of The Road.

Recommended Places to Stay in Sillghat:

Hotel: Danife Hotel
Room rate: 1200NPR double room
Meal price: 400NPR Dhal Bhat

Hotel: Khaptad Homestay
Room rate: 8000NPR Double Room
Meal price:



Laxmi Magar The Female Trailblazer



Laxmi Magar has been the standout trailblazer in female Nepali mountain biking over the past decade, enduring years of solitude as the only high-level female rider in a male-dominated sport, competing in male category races as female categories simply did not exist. Laxmi's tenacity and inspiration to others resulted in a flurry of new female riders coming onto the scene, which in turn has led to female category mountain bike races being introduced in Nepal.

Laxmi was raised in the small, isolated village of Gorkho, 20km outside Kathmandu. The only bicycle she saw as a young child belonged to her visiting cousins,

and she would steal the bike for a few moments and remember the instant feeling of freedom and joy.

Laxmi is a 2x national female champion, won gold at the 2019 South Asian Games, has won the gruelling Yak Attack, as well as other accolades internationally from India to Sri Lanka and Switzerland.

When Laxmi is not training for competitions, she can be found guiding mountain bike tourists in the Annapurna region and helping to develop the next generation of riders through the Nepal Cycling School.

What are your first memories of riding a bike?

So many memories, but I always remember the feelings of freedom, fascination and joy when I first began riding a bike when my cousins came to visit with their bicycles. I would send their bikes and pedal away into the open spaces. Even in those early days I felt a special connection to a bike. A big memory was the first time I raced in Nagan in 2008. That was extremely challenging and made



Photo by Wipe Thru

me realize I had to work hard to improve.

When did you get your first mountain bike? Describe your feelings at that time.

I bought my first mountain bike in 2013 through instalments when I started working at Pathfinder bike shop. I felt super light and so much faster. It was a different feeling with equipment like suspension. I could ride more challenging terrain. It opened up a whole new world for me.

When did you realize that you wanted to take mountain biking seriously and compete and make a living from it?

At Pathfinder, I had the chance to learn about mountain biking routes, itineraries, and tools, which really brought me into the industry with a deep interest. It was there that I learned about MTB races in the mountains. I also stopped worrying about damaging my bike as I could quickly get parts and fix issues at the bike shop. Then my confidence became strong to pursue racing and