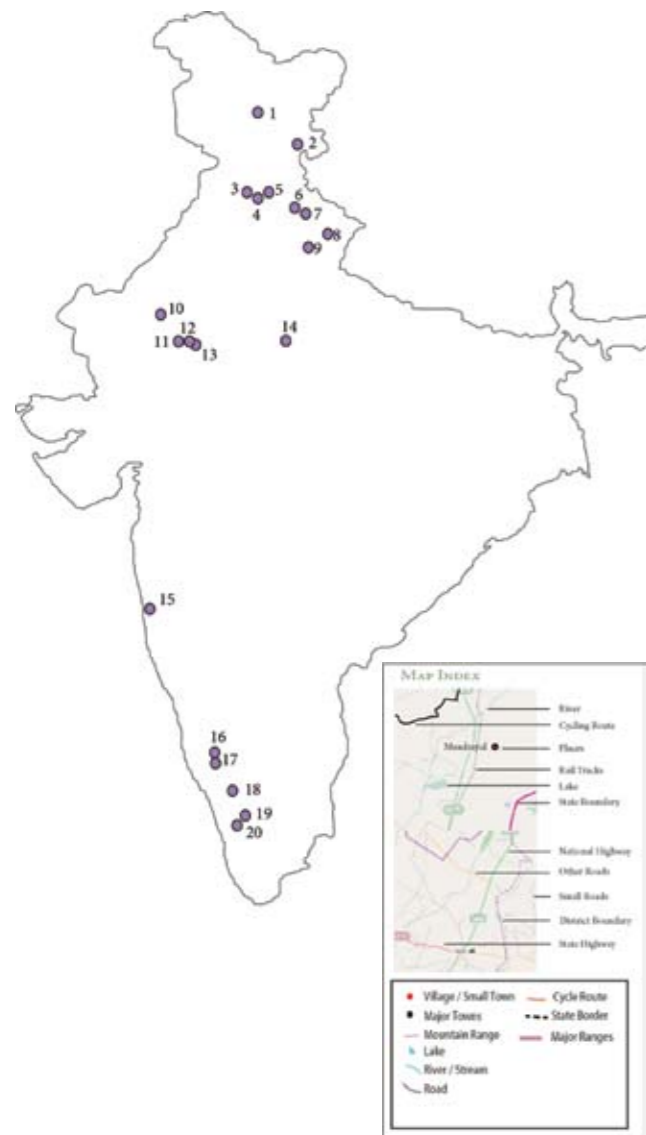


# 20 BEST CYCLE RIDES

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.

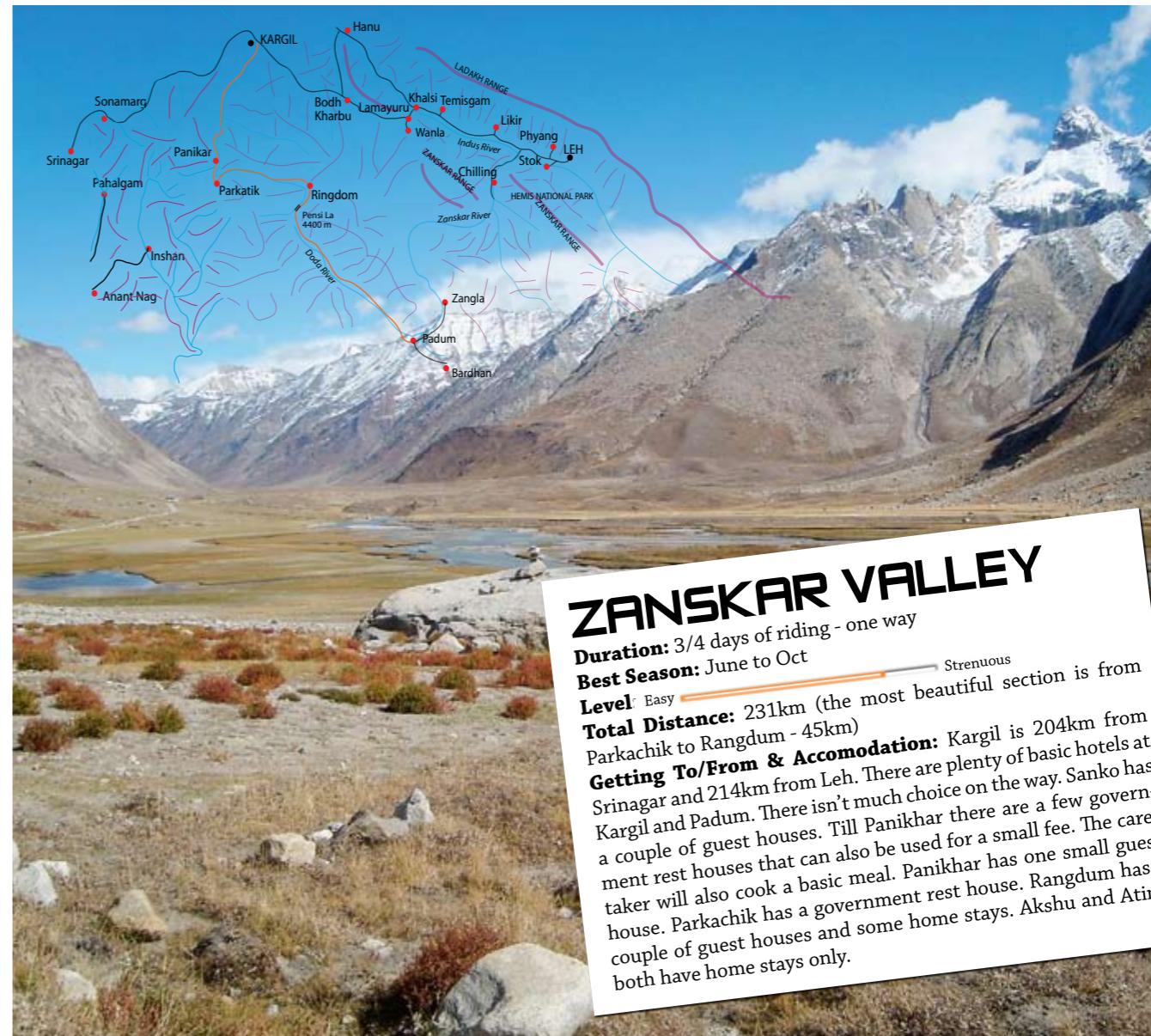
**Road signs/maps:** There are virtually no road signs in India. Maps do help. (Map Source - Open Street Map and Open Cycle Map used under the CC-BY-SA 2.0 licence). Else, carry a GPS with pre-loaded maps. In some remote areas mobiles may not work.

**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.**