

As we ride those Himalayan trails, facing swithbacks is inevitable.
Hans Rey show you how to tackle them properly and with style.

photos: MESUM VERMA
text: HANS REY

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HANS NO WAY REY **switchback**

General Info: Every Switchback and every turn is slightly different from each other, therefore there are different techniques a rider can use. As more techniques a rider knows the more choices he or she has. It also depends on your main goal; do you want to be as fast as possible, as save as possible, etc....

Some techniques can include a power slide, which will be initiated by sliding your rearwheel, with the help of your rear brake, around a corner - this technique can be faster than rolling - but it takes a lot of finesse and its not always save or possible.

A rider can also hop around the corners by hopping the back wheel to the outside of the turn (at the beginning of the turn), or hopping the front wheel to the inside at the exit of the turn. This technique is necessary at very slow and tight turns.

The technique described in the following photos is when its possible to ride the turn without hopping or sliding. By the way, its possible to apply a combination of all techniques.



Rolling around a tight switchback. Approach the turn, standing on your bike with your favourite foot horizontal forward (my favourite foot is my left foot). At very tight switchbacks I sometimes change feet, so my outside foot is the forward foot - that gives me more control to get off the bike if needed or to control the bike around the turn. Try to ride as wide as possible to the outside as you approach the turn, that way your turning radius will be bigger which makes everything easier.

Your arms and legs should be slightly bend (they are your shock absorbers). Find the right point of the turn (this varies from turn to turn) when to turn the front wheel. In this turn I decide to run the front wheel at the very inside of the turn. That way i will stay away from the exposed edge, I ride the turn more in the fall line and I have room to hop my back wheel to the riders left side, if the turn gets too tight.





Turn the bars, shift your body weight behind the seat and your butt to the outside of the turn. (Please note, when you ride steep and tight switchbacks you need to lower your seat - it will make everything much easier and safer). As steeper a trail gets as more I lower my heels to the ground. (look on the photos, my heels of my shoes are below the horizontal line of my crank arms), this helps to get your centre of gravity lower and further back, it also makes it easier to get off your bike if necessary - please note the only way to get off your bike is to the inside or behind your bike.

Continue to roll slowly through the turn - don't try to rush it - find the perfect and best line for the front wheel, don't worry too much about the back wheel - it will follow automatically - but be aware of the terrain and loose rocks or uneven obstacles that could make you throw off balance. If you are good enough and the trail is smooth enough you can make a small nosewheelie and move at the same time your back wheel further to the outside - this takes a lot of finesse - practice first in a safe situation. Remember to have your weight far back, in this position the smallest step can make you flip over the handlebars if you are not prepared.



Now you are approaching the exit of the turn - use the whole width of the trail, that means now you can aim with your front wheel towards the edge of the cliff. After you passed the apex of the turn the danger of flipping over is much smaller. Make small corrections with your brakes, steering and body movement constantly. For example, if you come to a rock in your way, lift the front wheel on top of it or over it, so you don't flip over, Important it to take your time, don't try to rush it. Patience are important. Notice my body position on the bike is similar than when I just do a track stand on even ground, that shows that my balance is good and stable, except that I have my weight far behind the seat, to compensate for the steepness of the mountain.

Enjoy the ride

Hans Rey