



Expedition training - general

Your trip is going to involve some physical challenge, so here are some notes to help you prepare. First some general notes, and then a section relevant to your particular challenge, including a simple training plan.

Everyone will have a different level of fitness and experience and will meet different challenges during the expedition, but feeling healthy and prepared will mean you'll find the experience more enjoyable and rewarding.

What to expect

Here are some common things that crop up on most expeditions. Also consult the specific notes for your trip, and consider how prepared you think you are:

- **The first couple of days can be very tiring.** What with the travelling, the excitement, and the change of environment, people often find the first few days challenging. Starting confident and rested will help you get over this initial hurdle.
- **Extremes of temperature.** Feeling confident you are used to the cold and know how to keep comfortably warm, used to physical exercise and knowing how to manage your hydration, should be part of your training.
- **Long days.** There might be days where you are on the go for 8 hours, so knowing you can comfortably be out and about for that long, is important. Could you get up and do it again the next day?
- **Varied terrain.** Uneven ground, steep inclines and snow makes things much harder. You'll need to be fully prepared for what lies ahead.
- **Bursts of intense activity.** Sometimes there will be steep and tough bits that really test you, so you need to be prepared, and knowing that if you just keep going that bit longer you will get a rest!
- **At least a bit of pain.** Be it blisters, sore muscles, sore joints etc, this is normal. If you have done some good training you will be familiar with this and it won't feel so bad if it happens on the expedition.
- **Basic living conditions.** Enjoying living in basic log cabins takes a certain frame of mind!
- Most of all, remember that you are going to do it! Training beforehand will greatly enhance your enjoyment of all the beautiful things you see, the people you meet, the wonderful experiences you have along the way, and your sense of achievement at the end.



Getting started

Consider seeing your doctor

Before you start on a new training programme, it is always a good idea to see your doctor. Take all the trip details with you so the doctor understands what you are going to do. If you or your doctor have any concerns, please contact us. We can deal with most things if we understand your needs well in advance.

Start early

Take some time to work out your training plan for the coming months. Depending on your current fitness, training may need to start six months before your departure. If you start early and work within your limits, you will get great results.

A plan, with some goals along the way, will keep you focussed and motivated. Use our suggestions for its basis and modify it according to your needs and preferences.

Why not contact your charity to see if there are any participants in your area who would like a training buddy?

Whilst you're training

Stretching

Tight muscles hurt, don't work well, are more prone to injury, and can cause joint problems. Make stretching a habit through your training to improve flexibility in your muscles and joints. You will find that it will pay real dividends, and it feels great afterwards!

There is lots of information about stretching on the internet. We think this page on Runners World is a good place to start: www.tinyurl.com/2ru9le.

Consider Yoga or Pilates classes in your training. These will help with your flexibility and core stability, and a regular commitment will keep you going.

Easy does it

Rest is as important as exercise. If you feel exhausted or ill but still push yourself to the limits, you may do yourself more harm than good. Take time off and recover. Work within your comfortable limits and these will expand with time.

Enjoy your training. Take in your environment as you go, and even while training you will discover new things.

Mix it up

Add variety by using different approaches. This alleviates boredom and means you're getting fitter without putting the same strain on the same bits of your body all the time. But remember which activity you are training for and focus on that as much as you can.



Consider some of the following when putting together your own plan:

- **Interval training.** Alternate between fast and slow pace every few minutes. As you get confident, increase the length of the fast periods.
- **Aerobic conditioning.** This trains the heart to pump blood more efficiently, allowing more oxygen to get to muscles and organs. It normally involves an activity where you maintain your heart rate at about 65 to 80% of its maximum for about 20 minutes. You can find out more here: www.tinyurl.com/39bcco.
- **Cross-training.** Many forms of exercise can be used to help you train effectively. Sports such as running, cycling, swimming or canoeing will help. All use similar muscle groups and help to increase your overall levels of stamina.
- **Join a gym.** You don't have to do this, but gyms are used by many different people and generally provide a wide range of great activities and support.
- **Weights.** You could try improving your strength by adding a weights session to your training programme. Your local gym will advise you on this.

Keep a diary

Log the type of exercise undertaken and your achievements (distance, time taken, and how you felt at the end of each session). This will help you stay focused, realistic, and maintain motivation by showing how much you have improved.

Eat well

Food and drink are vital elements for training, and during the expedition. Good food will fuel, maintain, and repair your body.

Fresh, everyday food has all the nutrients and energy you need for a good balanced diet. Here's a rule of thumb:

- **Carbohydrates (60%)** are fuel for your muscles. Eat plenty of pasta, beans rice, whole grains, fruit and vegetables. Sugar is not as valuable and can leave you feeling deflated and low on energy.
- **Proteins (20%)** are used to repair your muscles. They can be a good source of vitamins and minerals which will help your immune system and keep colds at bay. Good sources of protein are fish, fresh green leafy vegetables, and red meat.
- **Fats (20%)** are important to help the body repair itself and store certain vitamins. Oily fish are good sources of fat, as are seeds such as sesame and sunflower.

As you increase the distance over which you are training, you will need to ensure that you eat well, both before and after the session. Eat or drink carbohydrate-rich food during the hour following a long session to experience the benefits, as this is when your muscles are ready and able to be refuelled.

For outings of over two hours, try to eat as you go. Try bananas, cereal bars or dried fruit.

Avoid training too soon after a large meal as this can lead to stomach upsets.



And drink!

We cannot emphasise enough how important it is to drink water and sports drinks before, during and after training, and during the expedition. If you don't give your body all the water it needs, it quickly stops working properly.

Some main points to remember to make sure you are suitably hydrated:

- Don't wait until you feel thirsty as by then you are on your way to dehydration.
- Limit sports drinks to 1 litre for every 2 litres of water consumed.
- Eat foods containing sodium as these can help your body absorb the water it needs.
- Avoid diuretics – especially alcohol.

Specific training

The next section provides you with some guidance specific to your trip.

You decide the exact nature of your preparation but training is essential. Some people will consider themselves fit enough already, whilst others will know they need to put in a lot of preparation.



Expedition training

Dog sledding

Even though during the dog sledding part of the event, your dogs will be doing a lot of the work, don't be fooled! The daily activity does not just entail sitting on the sled looking at the scenery for 5 hours! This form of travel is a team sport – you and the dogs being the team! You need them to provide most of the power but they need you to keep them out of trouble, slow them down where necessary and help them along by your own physical effort, under various circumstances and in various types of terrain. They also need you to balance and control the sled that they pull, feed them, occasionally untangle them and of course encourage them with a friendly word or whistle!

On flat ground you may well be resting as the dogs whisk you along. This is the time to take a photo or a video clip and take in your wonderful surroundings. Most of the time however managing a sled requires a lot of concentration. You will be constantly shifting your weight, leaning to balance the sled and grinning from ear to ear! There will potentially be extended periods of physical input in the form of 'scooting' with one leg (just as you would on a child's scooter) to assist the dogs. Occasionally you may have to walk or run alongside the sled when the terrain gets steeper or the snow deeper and very occasionally you may find yourself pushing the sled too! You may also find yourself spending time with a foot (or two) literally 'on the brake' to stop your super-keen dogs overtaking the sled in front! You may even find that the sled tips over if you lose concentration or lean the wrong way on a corner and you will have to hang on tight until the dogs stop! So there are certainly bursts of harder activity and sometimes very short bursts of quite intense physical effort amongst the easy bits, but that only goes to increase the sense of satisfaction after a day being fully immersed in this classic form of polar travel. To minimise sore and aching muscles and back, you will need to train and be as fit as possible.

Nordic and cross country ski-ing

This is what skiing started out as; putting some long pieces of wood on your feet to prevent you sinking too far into the snow! It is a fantastic way to travel and is basically hill walking on skis with a free ride down the hills. The right mental approach is necessary to enjoy this fully, and by that we mean 'expect to fall over!' Absolutely everyone finds themselves lying in the snow at sometime or another and that includes the experienced. The basic techniques will be explained and demonstrated in a very relaxed and enjoyable way and then it is learning by doing. It is great fun and the more physical preparation you do the more you will enjoy it. Besides all the general training, exercises that help specifically are those that help train your balance and core stability. All forms of skating are particularly good, any balance activities, but just standing on one leg for 30 seconds at a time in the bus queue will pay dividends. Back Country skiing as the Americans call it provides a total body workout and you will certainly sleep well after a day on cross country skis. For those who have skied on alpine skis before then rest assured that all the same techniques are entirely relevant. However, it is certainly not necessary or important to have skied before. What you will need is a good level of upper and lower body fitness, strength and stamina and a great sense of humour!



Some suggested goals

If by the end of your training programme you know you can do the following reasonably comfortably, then you should start the expedition with a very good level of confidence:

- Walk 15 miles one day, and again the next day.
- Walk at a fast pace or run up a steep hill for 20 minutes with no big stops, have a rest and then carry on as normal.
- Walk at a fast pace or run up and down steep, difficult terrain confidently.

Don't worry this isn't a "must do" list, but it is a realistic indicator. If you feel you might struggle in some respects, there will be lots of support for you along the way.

Your training

Use walking as the main part of your training. Think in terms of time, rather than distance. A few ten minute walks a day for the first few days should help to break you in. Build up the mileage steadily. Regardless of your fitness level, we recommend you avoid large increases in effort.

As the expedition gets closer, try to leave whole weekends free for long training walks. Time spent walking 15-20 miles a day, back-to-back, will pay dividends.

If you live near hills, use them for your training as much as possible to strengthen your muscles and back. If you don't have any hills near you, visit hilly places for your weekend walks or use the incline setting on a treadmill.

Walking in a group will encourage you to train, and will take you to lots of beautiful places. You could join a local club, or the Ramblers Association: www.ramblers.org.uk

To build further stamina, strength and suppleness, mix in other forms of training. Use the gym, lots of stretching, and other forms of cross-training described earlier.

Finally, allow yourself to be inventive and never pass up an informal opportunity to train - for example:

- Run with the dog when it is walk time or the children when they want to cycle
- Always use the stairs rather than the lift
- Park further away from the supermarket so you can get an extra arm and shoulder workout carrying the shopping bags a longer distance or carry a couple of weighted bags whenever you have to walk somewhere.
- Do 30 second bursts of isometric exercise (tensing) for each of your muscle groups any time you find yourself on a train, a passenger in a car, queuing for the ATM and so on.

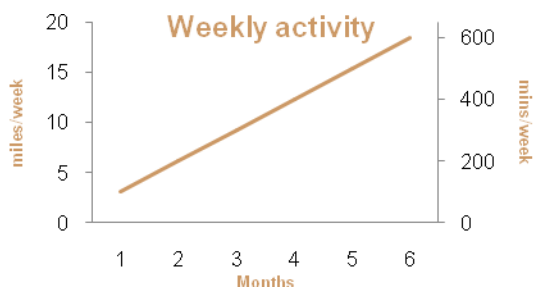
Once you start you will be amazed how many mini workouts you can build into your day which all help to make you better equipped to get the most from your formal training.



A 6 month plan

When beginning your training programme, start gently. Aim for three exercise sessions per week, building up to 30 minutes for each.

This is a guide for those with a reasonable current level of fitness (able to do at least 15 minutes of moderate exercise comfortably).



The graph shows how the amount of exercise might increase over time.

It roughly indicates the weekly activity you should aim for at the end of each month.

Here are a few more pointers to bear in mind as you go:

- Month 1** Beginners start here! Keep to short frequent sessions. There's no rush.
- Month 2** With a few short sessions mid-week, try to add a longer session at weekends.
- Month 3** Keep building it up steadily. A ten mile walk should be comfortable.
- Month 4** Include hills, and cross training in your routine. Develop a good stretching routine.
- Month 5** Try to include one 4 hour walk each weekend. One weekend, walk both days.
- Month 6** Keep up the long weekend walks, and the rough terrain.
- Last week** Relax! Rest on your laurels – now would be a bad time to pull a muscle!

Please remember

What seems easy here can be much harder in an extreme environment with lots of other things to think about and manage. So, read the Event Specifics carefully so you are aware of what to expect and come to the information day armed with lots of questions about where you are going and how to prepare.

In summary

Enjoy your training. Take your time. Remember, the challenges are not just physical, and everyone on the trip will be there to support each other. At times it may be tough, but there is every reason to finish feeling you've done a great thing, and had a great time!

Good luck