

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 greatly enhance your enjoyment of all that you do, the people you meet, and your sense of achievement at the end. A project requires a wide range of input from the team, and everyone will find a way of contributing that suits their abilities and skills.

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 long journey, jet lag, 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 used to physical exercise whilst hot, and knowing how to manage your hydration, should be part of your training to make you better prepared and help you cope with the tasks.
- **Long days.** There might be days where you are on the go for 8 hours, so knowing you can comfortably be on your feet and working for that long, is important. Could you get up and do it again the next day?
- **Varied terrain.** If you are walking, remember this can be on rough terrain; loose rocks, sand or wet ground! You'll need to train on all kinds of surfaces 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 used to this, 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.
- **Manual labour.** Projects are by their nature very physical. There is likely to be plenty of lifting, shifting, shovelling and stretching involved. The more who can contribute to these activities, the better.
- **Life in a tent.** Enjoying living from a tent takes a certain frame of mind! Why not get some practise with your sleeping bag and a tent?

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

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, or consider joining a local club with a related activity?

Whilst you're training

Stretching

Tight muscles hurt, do not 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/39bcc0.
- **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.
- Carry your liquid in a camelback or platypus – it's a good place to put the weight, and you can keep sipping without interrupting your rhythm.
- 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.
- See our health section for more information on dehydration.

Specific training

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

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

Expedition training – trekking

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 up a steep hill for 20 minutes with no big stops, have a rest and then carry on as normal.
- Walk up and down steep rocky terrain confidently.
- Deal with the problems of blisters and being hot.
- Comfortably carry your backpack with the day kit we've listed.

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

Walking is the best way to train. 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 time or distance.

Don't forget that even if you are accustomed to walking, you will probably not be used to walking for up to 8 hours a day on uneven ground - sometimes walking on steep trails or difficult terrain.

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 prepare your muscles for doing lots of upward walking! 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

Walking tips

To ensure you are comfortable when walking long distances, you must pay attention to your posture and gait. The following tips will help you to walk comfortably and avoid injury:

- Keep your head up and your back straight, shoulders relaxed and level, especially when going up and down hill.
- Don't overstretch. Use a natural stride length. Take short steps when going uphill.
- Train with the rucksack you will use for the trek, including its equivalent weight. The extra weight of the rucksack will alter your gait, and your body will appreciate the chance to get used to this.
- Walk at your own speed. Don't feel you have to keep up with faster people.

Train using the walking boots you intend to take with you on the trek. This will help you to get used to them, break them in, and ensure they are comfortable for the trek.

Expedition training – project work

Stamina

Long days of physical work, especially in hotter climates, can be very tiring. Working on your stamina will pay dividends. The best way to do this is to do some regular aerobic exercise. Walking, running, cycling and other similar activities will all help increase your stamina.

As an example, if you can comfortably walk 15 miles in the hills then you will be off to a very good start.

Strength and flexibility

You are likely to find plenty of opportunities to test your muscles and joints! You may want to consider visiting a gym or getting advice from a physiotherapist to tone up that twinge in the back or strengthen a temperamental knee.

You could try improving your strength by adding a weights session to your training programme. Your local gym will advise you on this.

But equally important will be good flexibility so don't forget to stretch.

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** Start building your confidence on rough and steep terrain.



ACROSS THE DIVIDE

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!

Work with others

If you think you do need to get into some regular exercise, it really helps to do this with others. Find out if others going on your trip live nearby and team up with them, join a gym, a walking club, or similar.

Please remember

What seems easy here can feel much harder in an environment of high or low temperatures, sun, humidity, rain and steep terrain. 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 trek 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