



Long Distance Walking Programme

Training programme

Training for your trek will ensure that you are physically prepared and able to complete the challenge safely. It will also greatly contribute to your enjoyment of the event.

Don't forget that, even if you are accustomed to walking, you will probably not be used to walking for what could be twelve hours plus on uneven ground – sometimes walking on steep trails or difficult terrain. You should aim to increase your fitness levels to prepare yourself for this type of challenge.

Medical check-up

Before you start on a new training programme, it is always a good idea to consult with your local doctor. You may wish to take our recommended training programme along with you so the doctor knows the level of training you are hoping to carry out.

NB all people have different levels of 'trainability' and natural potential. It is possible for complete beginners to make very rapid progress and move up through the targets, while others find initially that they can't achieve the early training levels.

Remember the two golden rules: a) build up very gradually and b) you must rest and recover to enable the training to become beneficial.

The Willow Foundation does not accept responsibility for any injury, loss or damage to you or your property incurred during participation in this event. Any participant who has any concern about his or her physical condition is advised to consult his/her own doctor before taking part in the event or any training leading up to the event.

Whilst training, use the walking boots that you intend to take with you on the trek. This will help you get used to them, will break them in and make sure they are comfortable during the walk itself.

Set aside plenty of time to train for the challenge. You should start training at least six months before the challenge itself. Taking a little time to work out your training plan for the coming months will really pay off. It will give you an idea of what you are aiming to achieve and will help to keep you motivated. We have put together a suggested training plan, which you can build upon according to your own expectations.

Stretching

Tight muscles hurt and perform less efficiently. They are also more prone to injury. The more you strive to prevent muscle tiredness, the better off you will be. In order to help improve flexibility in your muscles and joints we recommend a thorough warm up prior to walking (in order to warm up for a walk, begin strolling at a more leisurely pace for up to five minutes) Additionally, while walking try to stretch regularly (we recommend five minutes' stretching for every hour that you walk). Try to make stretching a habit through your training. You will find that it will pay real dividends in the long run.

The guiding principals for stretching are outlined below:

- Always warm up prior to undertaking a long walk – walk slowly for 10 minutes or walk in place for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Hold each stretch for 15 to 20 seconds – and never bounce in the stretch
- Achieve your stretching position gently – don't bounce or jerk.
- Only stretch within your limits. If you feel any discomfort, stop

Suggested trekking training programme:

Month 1

When beginning your training programme, try to build up your fitness levels – don't try to do too much before you are ready. Aim for three exercise sessions per week, building up to 30 minutes of exercise in each session.

Target = three sessions of exercise per week of 30 minutes by the end of month 1

Month 2

Now you are able to complete three sessions of exercise per week, you should look to build this up slowly. Continue your routine of three sessions of at least 30 minutes exercise each week, but aim to walk a total of 6 miles each week.

Target = 4-6 miles of walking per week by the end of second month.

Month 3

Build up your stamina slowly by increasing the length of your walk a little for each session. Again, try two to three shorter sessions of around three miles each during the week, and a longer walk on the weekend to reach the target.

Target = 8-10 miles of walking per week by the end of month 3.

Tip -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, use the incline setting on a treadmill or visit hilly places for your weekend walks to practise.

Month 4

Now you are building up stamina, you should be ready to increase your walking targets.

Target = 10-14 miles of walking per week by the end of fourth month.

Month 5

You will need to increase your walking distance again this month to 16-20 miles per week.

Target = 16-20 miles of walking per week by the end of fifth month.

Month 6

Walk every day for at least one hour*, followed by at least one weekend in the month of back-to-back walking – 5-6 hours on Saturday AND Sunday. On other weekends, walk for four hours on at least one of the days.

Target = 20-25 miles of walking per week by the end of month 6.

* Within your training programme, rest is as important as time spent on your feet. We strongly recommend that you rest on at least one day out of seven. Equally, when training, stick within the limits of speed and distance that are comfortable for you.

Tip - to keep yourself motivated and avoid the boredom of walking alone, why not join a local walkers club or the Ramblers Association. Walking in a group will encourage you to train, and will take you lots of beautiful places around the UK.
www.ramblers.org.uk

Other types of training

You may like to consider some of the following activities when putting together your own personal training plan:

- **Interval training:** Distance runners use interval training as a means of improving their endurance levels, and so can you. Alternate between walking briskly for up to a minute, then returning to your original pace for a few minutes.
- **Aerobic conditioning:** Most of the aerobic training that you do must be on foot, outside. Training entirely on a treadmill will not adequately prepare you for the conditions that you will encounter on your trek. The route that you will take for Your trek will take you up and down hills, in addition to walking on the flat. Do not neglect your hill training (and remember that where there is an uphill, you will generally be rewarded with a downhill section).
- **Cross-training:** Many forms of aerobic exercise can be used to help you train effectively for the challenge. Sports such as running, cycling, swimming, canoeing or skiing will all help in a cross-training programme. All use similar muscle groups to those that you will use on Your trek, and help to increase your overall levels of stamina.
- **Weights:** You could try improving your strength by adding a weights session to your training programme. Strengthening your leg and buttock muscles using free weights or weight machines will increase your walking power. Walkers also benefit from strengthening other muscle groups, particularly in the abdominal and back region, as well as shoulders, chest and arms.

Chart your progress: Keep a training diary in which you log type of exercise undertaken and your achievements (for example, distance walked, time taken and even how you felt at the end of each session). This will help keep you focused, honest and allow you to map your progress. This will help maintain motivation by showing you how much you have improved as your programme progresses.

Injury Prevention

Walkers experience one of the lowest incidences of injury among exercisers. Injuries that do occur are often easily prevented – inadequate training and over-training can lead to injury, as can poorly fitting shoes and socks, poor flexibility, inadequate hydration and nutrition. Make sure:

- You warm up before starting to train, and cool down afterwards.
- You stop if your body is hurting.
- You don't over train, or try to do too much too soon. Build up gently rather than exhausting yourself.
- You have the right kit – good, comfortable boots and socks.

Walking techniques

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

- Stand tall and keep your head up – keep your back straight, shoulders relaxed and level and stomach muscles tight – pulling them towards your spine.
- Take a natural stride length – don't overstretch yourself.
- Touch the ground with your heel first – roll the foot forward – through the arch and over the ball of your foot – to your toes then push off.
- Keep your elbows close to your body.
- Shorten your stride when walking up hill – your legs, lungs and heart have to work harder to power you up the hill. You should also keep your back straight.

- Keep your back straight when walking down hill.
- Walk at your own speed – do not feel pressurised to keep up with faster members of the group.
- Walk correctly, and you'll finish the Your trek challenge on sturdy, albeit tired, legs, ready to spring into action again the next day.

Over training

The warning signs associated with over training include fatigue, low-grade fever, moodiness, irritability, decreased appetite and sex drive and increased resting heart rate. If you feel lousy but still push yourself to the limits to maintain the training schedule that you have set for yourself, you may find that you are doing yourself more harm than good. Take time off. Let your body recover. You will not lose ground. Far from it. You will return to your training with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

If your training regime does lapse, don't panic! Don't completely give up and reach for the cakes! Just pick up from where you left off, or if you have really lost enthusiasm do something else that you enjoy – or drag someone else out walking with you!

Mix and match!

Mixing different training adds variety and can help to alleviate the boredom associated with doing the same activity every day. Your body and your mind will stay motivated to train as your trek approaches. However, do not deceive yourself.

The best training for walking is walking!