

Long Distance or Trek Training Plan

Congratulations on signing up for this tough but very rewarding challenge!

Following this training plan will ensure that you are physically prepared and able to complete the challenge safely and relatively comfortably. Being fit and well-prepared will also really contribute to your enjoyment of the experience!

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 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:

- build up very gradually
- you must rest and recover to enable the training to become beneficial.

Walking Levels

Miles per hour or heart rate are too variable a measure of exertion across different terrain and walkers, so use Sing - Talk - Gasp

SING - easy walking. You should be moving comfortably enough to sing your favourite songs

TALK - steady walking. You are moving quickly but still able to talk intelligibly (if not intelligently!)

GASP - quick walking. You can't string a complete sentence together without running out of puff

For extra strength training Carry a backpack, loaded with clothes, drink, or bags of rice to a weight of 6 - 10lbs

For extra fat loss Do the short sessions in the morning after a glass of water but before eating. Otherwise leave three hours post-meal before heading out. On longer hikes, sip a dilute juice drink (half and half with water) - 1 litre per hour

On any walk over 60 minutes, sip water or juice along the way - increasing the volume to 1 litre per hour after the first month. For the first month, snack on a few jelly babies. For the following months snack every 20 minutes - half a muesli bar, a banana, a dozen gummy bears. .

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Always eat within 30 minutes of finishing and include a portion of lean protein such as chicken, fish or cottage cheese. On longer walks feel free to take short breaks every 45 minutes - no longer than five minutes, and keep warm.

Important Note! Listen to your body. As you start and continue your training you will expect to feel slightly fatigued and your muscles may ache after training. Gentle stretching is important after exercise. If any tenderness or discomfort does not go away after rest, consult medical advice. If you experience any sudden pain, tightness in the chest or breathlessness consult medical advice immediately.

Kit Selection

Crucial to your enjoyment and comfort on the trek will be the kit you are wearing.

Boots should be well-broken-in. If they are not, wear them everywhere - shopping, gardening, to work. Backpack comfort is also crucial - the waist belt should sit just above the points of your hip bones and the padded shoulder straps extended well below the collarbones. A chest strap will prevent the shoulder straps digging into the armpits, and also useful for women with a slighter build to stop the straps slipping off the shoulders. Pulling the straps so the pack is snug to your body, but not so tight it impedes your breathing, will make for a much more comfortable walk.

Any reputable outdoor supplier will be able to give you reliable advice on kit including boots and backpacks to suit you, whatever your weight, height, gender or ability.

Practice carrying a full pack when you are out training in preparation for the trek. Lay out all the gear you will need - hat, gloves, waterproofs, full water bottle and snacks. When packing your backpack, make sure the weight is evenly distributed - keep heavier items close to your body and low in the pack. Keep items you are likely to use regularly near the top. A hydration system with a tube for regular sipping prevents the need to stop frequently to take a drink.

The Nutrition Plan

'Healthy eating' needn't be 'fun free', we need fat in our diet to remain healthy; we need carbohydrate in our diet and we need fibre too. At the end of the day it's a question of balance.

Leading up to your trek you should try to follow a healthy balanced diet. The training is very physically demanding, so you will need to increase your calorie intake. Food choices are important when training for any fitness challenge and whether you are looking at your trek as a fun day out or a race against the clock, subtle changes to what you eat and drink will help to improve your performance and help keep you healthy so you can train regularly and also recover afterwards.

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Fluid intake is especially important during training. It is vital to drink plenty of water before and after exercise sessions – aim to drink two litres of water per day. Try to reduce your intake of tea, coffee, sugary drinks and alcohol.

Increase your intake of fruit and vegetables high in vitamins A, C and E as they contain anti-oxidants, which help to reduce toxin build up in the body. Eat lots of the following:

- Non citrus fruits such as strawberries, cherries and pears
- Brightly coloured vegetables such as peppers, carrots and aubergines
- Green vegetables, especially broccoli, courgettes and spinach

As always try and stick to the daily recommended intake of at least five fruit and vegetable portions per day. Everybody should try and do this as part of a healthy diet. 80g makes up a portion e.g. one apple, two plums, a glass of fruit juice, two heaped tablespoons of peas or one bowl of salad.

It is important to get enough protein, but you don't need to overdo it. Try and incorporate one or two servings of fish per week. White fish is a great low fat option and oily fish, like sardines or salmon gives us a good supply of unsaturated omega-3 fats.

Try and get around 60% of your calories from carbohydrates – at least one rice, pasta or potato portion per day should cover this. Think of these foods as fuel – these will give your muscles the energy you need to train.

You will have depleted your energy stores during your training sessions, so try to consume some carbohydrates as soon as possible. This will speed up your recovery and enable your body to rebuild, restock and be ready for your next exercise session. During the 15-minute period following your exercise session, your muscles are very receptive to loading on fuel and can restock at a much faster rate than usual. By refuelling correctly after exercise you will experience less overall fatigue for the remainder of the day. Even if you are not feeling very hungry try a piece of fruit and yoghurt. Within two hours of exercise you should try to eat a balanced meal of complex carbohydrates and low fat protein, for instance chicken with pasta. Go for wholegrain varieties where possible.

There is some sense in 'loading up' on carbohydrates the night before your trek as they are slow energy releasers, but try healthier options such as brown rice, wholemeal or wheat free pasta with a light non dairy sauce. Don't eat anything too high in fat or heavy protein or you'll find it sitting on your stomach in the morning. Drink plenty of water the night before the trek. On the morning of the trek get up nice and early and have a light breakfast. Porridge made with water and a little honey would be a good option.

You will also need to experiment with forms of energy to take on board during the trek. There are many different options ranging from pre mixed sports drinks to powdered energy gels and bars.. Use a variety on your training sessions and find the one that suits you, and your stomach, the best.. You need to also get used to drinking and snacking while walking - most people 'hit the wall' because they are simply dehydrated. Work on a steady intake of one litre per hour of walking.

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The Training Plan

Try and follow the following plan as closely as possible. If it looks a little daunting, don't worry - one of the best things about walking is that it's so adaptable.

Short of time? Use Session Two of each week to take a break from the computer screen at lunchtime and go for a walk - you can even get your colleagues to join you!

More of a gym bunny? No problem - the treadmill will be your friend - and the stepper is ideal for your hill training session too.

Worried about your training interfering with normal life at the weekend? The long walks at the weekend are ideal to take friends, family, partners out to enjoy the countryside. The dogs will love you too!

So, now's the time to get started

NB 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.

Month One

This month's training objective is about getting your body used to regular exercise.

The Programme			
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3
ONE	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 90 minutes
TWO	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 105 minutes
THREE	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 90 minutes
FOUR	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 120 mints

Notes

Sessions 1 & 2 are for the working week, session 3 for a day off. No sessions should be on consecutive days. Always eat within 30 minutes of finishing and include a portion of lean protein such chicken, fish or cottage cheese.

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Month Two

This month's training objective is to get used to consecutive days of activity. Completing the Peaks Challenge means you will need to be ready to walk on the day after the day before!

The Programme				
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
ONE	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 90 minutes	Easy 105 minutes
TWO	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 105 minutes	Easy 120 minutes
THREE	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 90 minutes	Easy 120 minutes
FOUR	Steady 45 minutes	Steady 45 minutes	Easy 120 mins	Easy 120 minutes

Notes

Session 1 & 2 are for the working week, but not on consecutive days. Sessions 3 & 4 are for the weekend or days off, and should be consecutive with one another - but not with Session 1 or 2.

Month Three

This month's training objective is to supplement your walking with other types of training - cycling, swimming, dancing. These will improve your cardiovascular fitness without overtaxing walking muscles. It will also add strength, not just to your legs but to core back and shoulder muscles, improving posture and decreasing the risk of fatigue or injury in the lower back.

The Programme				
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
ONE	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 120 minutes
TWO	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Easy 150 minutes
THREE	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 120 minutes
FOUR	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 150 minutes

Notes

Session 1 & 2 are for the working week, but not on consecutive days. Sessions 3 & 4 are for the weekend or days off, and should be consecutive with one another - but not with Session 1 or 2.

On any of the 'quick' walks, feel free to shift between 'steady' and 'quick' intensities until you get used to the higher intensity. See 'Sing-Gasp-Walk' descriptions. By the end of week four, you should be able to hold the 'Quick' pace for the full 45 minutes.

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Month Four

This month's training objective is to get used to feeding and drinking on the walks. As each Peak will take around six hours, keeping hydrated and nourished will make the trek much more pleasant and lessen fatigue.

The Programme				
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
ONE	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 150 minutes
TWO	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 75 minutes	Easy 150 minutes
THREE	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 150 minutes
FOUR	Steady 60 minutes	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 75 minutes	Steady 150 minutes

Notes

Wear your backpack for Sessions 1, 2 & 4. Start with a light load and add a kilo each week. Leave the pack off for Session 2 as the increased pace is important.

Month Five

This week's training objective is adding hills to the programme. If you live in a flat area, then climb flights of stairs, a couple of steps or even a sold bench. Start and finish each hill session with a 10 mins walk on the flat - if you are using the stairs or steps, go up and down the stairs a few times, then walk on the flat for twice the time spent on the stairs.

The Programme				
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
ONE	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 180 minutes
TWO	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 75 minutes	Easy 150 minutes
THREE	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 180 minutes
FOUR	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 75 minutes	Steady 150 minutes

Notes

Same as Month Four - wear your backpack for Sessions 1, 2 & 4. Start with a light load and add a kilo each week. Leave the pack off for Session 2 as the increased pace is important.

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Month Six

This month's training objective is about consolidating previously earned fitness. There is one extra-long walk as a final test drive and things become a little easier as the volume of the training (but not the intensity!) decreases.

The Programme				
WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
ONE	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 180 minutes
TWO	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 45 minutes	Steady 75 minutes	Easy 240 minutes
THREE	Steady 45 mins hills	Quick 30 minutes	Steady 60 minutes	Steady 120 minutes
FOUR	Steady 60 mins hills	Quick 30 minutes	Three Peaks Day 1	Three Peaks Day 2

Notes

Same as Month Four and Five- wear your backpack for Sessions 1, 2 & 4. Start with a light load and add a kilo each week. Leave the pack off for Session 2 as the increased pace is important. Use the spare time to read a hill walker's travelogue to fuel your excitement!

Congratulations! You have finished your training and should now be fully prepared for your challenge. You should be feeling fit, ready to go and confident that the past weeks have put you in the best shape to climb those hills!

Good luck and thank you very much for taking on this challenge to raise funds for the Willow Foundation.