

trekking training guide



Training is very specific to the activity that you are undertaking. Therefore to become fitter for trekking, you need to trek. This can be mixed up with some cross training of your favourite sport or outdoor activity i.e. swimming, aerobics, climbing, running, squash etc.

Most training should be part of an ongoing lifestyle but if this is not the case then you should begin training 4 – 6 months prior to the challenge. If you are very unfit and this is the first time you have ever undertaken a real trek, then this time will need to be extended.

why bother training?

- You will have a far better chance of completing the challenge.
- You will enjoy the trek far more if you have a good level of fitness.
- You are far less likely to become injured.
- It will allow you to prepare mentally for the trekking challenge.
- It strengthens your heart, reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- It will improve your circulation, breathing and endocrine functions.
- It tones muscles and strengthens bones, reducing the risk of osteoporosis.
- It reduces blood fat and cholesterol.
- It burns calories and helps you manage your weight.
- It boosts mental performance and improves psychological well-being.

how to avoid injuries whilst training and trekking

- To avoid blisters keep your feet dry and wear socks made with fibres which draw moisture away from your skin - steer clear of pure cotton. Don't lace your shoes too tightly or too loosely. As soon as a hot spot occurs (a rubbing of the skin which then feels warm), remove your boot and apply a blister prevention kit i.e. Compeed.
- Alternatively, avoid the problem happening in the first place by taping your heels with Zinc Oxide medical tape in a portrait fashion up and down the heel before putting liner socks on.
- When walking, try to make sure your heel touches the ground first and then you push off with your toe.
- Keep your toenails neatly trimmed and remove all hardened skin on the foot with a pumice stone.
- Try to walk with your head up and eyes focused ahead; not always easy at altitude or on difficult terrain!
- Keep your shoulders level, pulled back and down, lift your chest.
- Carry your arms either at 90° angles and move them forward and back, rather than side to side or allow them to relax by your sides.
- If using walking poles, remember to read the guidelines with regards arm angles etc.

walking boots

The choice of walking footwear is incredibly important and should not be decided on price alone. Your feet are what will get you up, along or around the trekking challenge so treat them with the best pair of footwear that you can afford that are appropriate for the trek. If trekking on rough terrain or with a rucksack, then the boot should have a reasonably high ankle and a stiff heel counter to give lateral support. There are two main different materials on the market for non technical trekking, leather or fabric. Both types need to be regularly waterproofed. Leather boots will normally last longer but need a lot of time to wear in whereas a good pair of fabric boots can feel like a pair of trainers and not always need to be worn in. Wear them around the house, on the way to work, etc, and then on longer trips. Once they have conformed to the shape of your feet there is less likelihood of getting blisters. No boot is 100% waterproof when in use. Damp feet can occur through water ingress over the top of the boot e.g. when over trousers are tucked into gaiters or through wicking down your socks. Dampness will occur within even the most water repellent boots through sweating. Thicker leathers generally last longer and give better waterproofing but need to be worn in and are heavier in use. Do not dry any boot using direct heat. When tying, pull the laces up towards the knee not outwards as this can lead to the weakening of the eyelets, hooks and rings. Never pass laces around the back of your ankle before tying as this could lead to tendon injury. Not only the boots but the socks that you wear are vitally important and it is worth investing in some good pairs of socks that do not blister. Taking time before the trek using your equipment is the key to having a successful expedition.

16 - 24 week training schedule



Again, one of the most important aspects of training is that you make it as specific as possible to the actual trekking expedition that you will be undertaking. This, of course, becomes difficult if you intend trekking at high altitude or in a very mountainous region and you live in Lincolnshire. There are however ways of overcoming this. Firstly, if you intend trekking at altitude, then it is a good idea to build up over the 16 weeks from carrying nothing on your back to carrying a day sack to carrying a full rucksack with all your equipment in. Secondly, if you intend trekking on steep terrain, then find a nearby hill (or an office block or block of flats with lots of stairs) and progress from walking on the flat to, once a week, walking the same distance or time on the staircase, both up and down.

Try to have a rest day in between each training day if possible. Remember to warm up, stretch, then exercise, cool down and stretch to finish.

You should progress to training with your boots on and any other equipment that you may be using on the actual trek from week 4 at the latest but preferably from week 1 if the boots have been worn in already.

The cross training and resistance training evening can always be on the same day as the shorter 1 hour walk.

You can involve friends or family on these training walks so that you are not always missing family and friend commitments.

The length of your training will depend upon your fitness level so if in doubt, seek professional advice from a fitness trainer at a local gym. The training schedule below allows for each pair of weeks to be extended into 3 weeks and the first week to be extended into 2 weeks, thereby providing you with a 24 week / 6 month programme.

- week 1:** Source a good circuit that you are happy with and provides you with the best fit for your expedition. 3 x 30mins walks.
- week 2 & 3:** 2 x 30 min walks. 1 x 1 hour walk. (for North Pole 1 x 1 hour tyre haul)
- week 4 & 5:** 2 x 30 min walks. 1 x 2 hour walk. (for North Pole 2 x 1 hour tyre haul)
- week 6 & 7:** 2 x 45 min walks. 1 x 2 hour walk. (for North Pole 1 x 1 hour tyre haul)
- week 8 & 9:** 2 x 1 hour walks (1 walk on difficult / steep terrain). 1 x 4 hour walk. (for North Pole 2 x 2 hour tyre hauls)
- week 10 & 11:** 2 x 1 hour walks (1 walk on difficult / steep terrain). 1 x 6 hour walk. 1 x cross training or resistance training evening. (for North Pole 3 x tyre haul 2 x medium 1 x long up to three hours)
- week 12 & 13:** 2 x 1 hour walks (1 walk on difficult / steep terrain). 1 x 8 hour walk (on difficult / steep terrain). 2 x cross training or resistance training evenings. (for North Pole 3 x tyre haul 2 x medium 1 x long up to three hours)
- week 14 & 15:** 2 x 1 hour walks (1 walk on difficult / steep terrain). 2 x 6 hour walk (on difficult / steep terrain - use the weekend to see how the body copes with two days of walking one after the other as on the trek). 2 x cross training or resistance training evenings. (For North Pole 3 x tyre haul 2 x medium 1 x long up to three hours)
- week 16:** 2 x 1 hour walks. 1 x 4 hour walk. (For North Pole 2 x 4 hour tyre hauls)

10 top tips for training



The above 16 week / 24 week programme is only a rough training guide and we at Charity Challenge are very aware that other commitments such as work, family and fundraising may not allow you to stick rigidly to the schedule. However, in order to get close to achieving the training it is very important to organise your time properly and prioritise your goals with regards this once in a lifetime expedition. Some ideas that have worked for other challengers are:

1. Get up an hour earlier and go out for a quick walk in the morning before work.
2. If you can walk to work, do so. If you get to work by public transport, get off a stop or two earlier than usual, so that you can walk some distance each day. If you drive, park further away than usual, or walk a longer route to work.
3. Use your lunchtimes to take regular brisk walks around your work area, not just a stroll around the shops.
4. Find a steep set of stairs i.e. five floors of a department store/office block and climb them five times, at least three times per week.
5. Cross training such as swimming, squash, badminton, cycling and any other sport will also help get you prepared.
6. Joining a leisure centre is a good idea as the local fitness instructors may well be able to design a programme specifically for you. Most good gyms have a walking machine, or even better a stair climber, where you can clock up mileage more safely and comfortably, but do try to walk as much as possible in 'real' conditions and wearing your rucksack and boots.
7. Book weekends away with the family or friends to some mountainous region in the UK to experience walking on different surfaces and in a mountain environment to test out all your equipment.
8. Book onto the Pre-Expedition Training Weekends in Snowdonia run by Expedition Wise.
9. You should make the time to walk some consecutive long days as on the training schedule. It is the accumulation of walking day after day that really tests you on expedition.
10. Always wear your expedition equipment; rucksack, boots etc even if you are walking up and down stairs in an office block or in the local park.

These notes were compiled by Brian Jackson, BA (Hons) in Sport, Health and Physical Education, who operates a series of Pre-Expedition Training Weekends for both trekking and cycling charity challenges. See www.charitychallenge.com for more information.