

Trek Training guide

We cannot stress enough just how important getting yourself in shape will be; good preparation will make your trek a far more enjoyable experience. Whilst you still have plenty of time to train your challenge will come round soon enough, therefore it is vital that you begin to make small changes soon.

This guide sets out to offer advice and support as you set out on your training preparations, though this is by no means the be all and end all of trekking abroad! Remember, always consult your doctor before undertaking any new exercise plan, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

10 tips to trekking - a step by step guide

1. One foot in front of the other!

It's that simple, right? Well, nearly. Whilst walking is an everyday activity for most of us, trekking for many days in a row can start to cause problems. To reduce these risks, when walking try to remain relaxed - focus on something 30 yards away - and walk heel to toe.

Do you really need all that in your day bag?! Heavy backpacks can lead to back problems. Try to walk tall, without a forward lean, slightly suck in your abdominals (tummy muscles), and use your arms to drive you forward. Take the time to find a backpack that fits properly and is comfortable; if possible ask for in-store help in adjusting straps. You should aim for a backpack that has a hip belt/strap as standard because the majority of your backpack load should rest on your hips; the shoulder straps should wrap close to your shoulders but they should not be carrying significant weight as this can cause undue stress to your shoulder, neck and upper-back muscles.

2. Listen to your body

Soon you'll feel fitter and have more energy. But should you start to feel pains during or after a walk, take time off and rest - don't let a niggle become an injury. Seek medical advice if unsure. Injuries are most commonly caused by using inappropriate footwear, or going too far or too fast, too soon.

Choosing the right footwear can make the difference between a great trip and a trip to the doctor - don't be afraid to invest! Walking shoes should be comfortable yet supportive, especially around the ankle. Laces should be tightened evenly from bottom to top and not tied restrictively; your feet will expand as they get warm. Likewise, well-fitted trekking socks (and spares!) will help reduce the chances of blisters. Trekking poles may also help reduce the strain on legs and knee joints. If you choose to use trekking poles on the trek itself it's strongly advised that you train with them beforehand – they can take a little getting used to!

3. Getting it right

Knowing how hard to work during training is very useful and may also offer you peace of mind. To find your heart rate zones you need to know your maximum heart rate (HRmax). To estimate this:

HRmax = 220 – age, therefore your HRmax = 220 - _____ = _____ bpm (ACSM Guidelines, 1995)

Calculate Your Target Zones:

(HRmax)

ZONE 1 Low Intensity	e.g. walking on flat terrain	Lower Limit	0.50	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.60	x		=	

ZONE 2 High Intensity	e.g. walking on undulating terrain	Lower Limit	0.60	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.70	x		=	

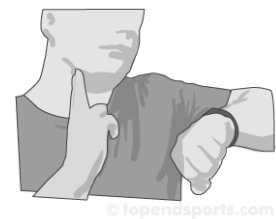
ZONE 3 Heavy Intensity	e.g. running	Lower Limit	0.70	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.85	x		=	

ZONE 4 Very Heavy Intensity	e.g. sprinting	Lower Limit	0.85	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.95	x		=	

Most of your training should be done in Zone 1 and into Zone 2 (and even Zone 3 on tough climbs).

There are many gadgets on the market that will accurately measure and monitor your heart-rate when resting, during exercise and after exercise.

If you are not using a heart-rate monitor you can take your heart rate using your pulse - just press your index and middle finger into the groove alongside the outer edge of your windpipe. Once you have found the beat, count this for 20 seconds. Multiply your number by 3 and you have your heart rate in beats per minute. Compare this number to your training zones.



If you find your heart rate is consistently in Zone 3 & 4 when walking, then slow down! You may also wish to consult your doctor for a health check.

4. The Plan

Everyone will have their own individual fitness levels and it is important to recognize these and be realistic with the targets you set yourself. The most important thing is not how fit or unfit you think you are at the moment, but that come trek time, you are able to complete week 14 of our training plan. Once you can do this, you are ready to enjoy your trekking experience to the fullest.

Remember it is important to build a base over a period of time, especially if you are new to exercise or haven't training in a while - 'you can't fire a cannon out of a canoe!' This philosophy will help prevent injury too.

Weeks 1-2:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1/2 hour walk Low Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	1 1/2 hour walk Low Intensity	N/A

Weeks 3-4:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1/2 hour walk Low Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	2 1/2 hour walk Low Intensity	N/A

Weeks 5-6:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	3 hour walk Low Intensity	N/A

Weeks 7-8:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	4 hour walk Low Intensity	3 hour walk High Intensity

Weeks 9-10:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	5 hour walk Low Intensity	4 hour walk High Intensity

Weeks 11-12:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	6 hour walk Low Intensity	6 hour walk High Intensity

Weeks 13-14:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity Low Intensity	8 hour walk High Intensity	8 hour walk High Intensity

Weeks 15-16:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour walk High Intensity	1/2 hour activity High Intensity	5 hour walk Low Intensity	N/A

Only do session 4 on weeks 8, 10, 12, 14, and ensure you take your rest days.

Try to add the strength circuit into your program. Start with 1 circuit and add 1 each fortnight.

Whether it is this guide you use, or another one, stick to it! Things may crop up that alter your plans, other commitments, injuries, lack of motivation etc, but commit yourself to do everything you can to follow your plan. Set up a blog, tell your friends what you're doing, stick it to your fridge, pay yourself to train!

Walk for time, not for miles.

5. Get ready

Be sure to start each walk with a warm up, especially in the cooler training months. Start with a slow walk for a few minutes, taking short steps, on flat terrain if possible. Then walk on tip toes for 10 steps before walking normally again. Repeat this 3 times. Now as you walk, flick your heels back towards your bum for 10 steps. Repeat this 3 times. Now as you walk (and ignoring any funny looks you may be getting!), bring your knees up towards your chest for 10 steps. Repeat this 3 times. By now the muscles of your legs should feel warmer

and your heart rate should be increasing gradually. Try a few arm circles too, start small and get bigger, go forwards and backwards.

After this, your body temperature should have risen, you may be a little more out of breath, and you are ready to begin you walk.

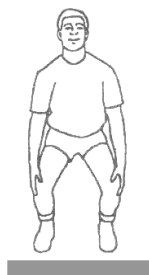
6. Find the strength

Take a look at these exercises for your legs, back and abdominals (tummy). Try them out in a repetition range of between 12 and 15. Once you are happy with them individually, put them all together in a circuit, i.e. 12-15 reps per exercise, all 5 exercises in a row. Take 30 seconds rest between exercises if you need it. Start with one circuit and build up gradually.

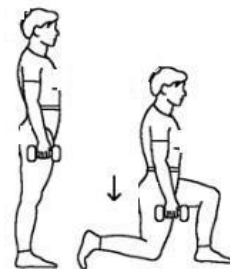
- Calf raise: stand with your feet hip width apart. Gradually rise up onto your tiptoes. Hold for 2 seconds and then return your heels back to the floor. For a greater range of movement, stand on a step with your heels dropping down lower than your toes. You may need something to hold onto!
12-15 reps
- Squats: stand with your feet hip width apart. Slowly sit down towards the floor until your knees get to 90°. Your body weight should be on your heels and you should be able to see your toes over your knees. Then stand up tall. Again, find something in front of you to hold onto if you need it.
12-15 reps
- Lunges: take a $\frac{3}{4}$ stride out in front of you. Bend both knees and sit down towards the floor. Your front knee should get to 90°. Push up tall through your front heel. Keep your feet in same position for all 12 repetitions before you switch legs.
12-15 reps
- Back extension: lay on your front with your arms outstretched in front of you. Slowly raise your chest off the floor. As you do so bring your arms back towards your sides, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Slowly return to the start position.
12-15 reps
- Abdominal crunch: lay on your back with your knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor and hip-width apart. Place your hands on your legs and slowly slide your fingertips up towards your knees. Slowly return back down to the start position. (The crunch may also be done with hands at side of the head – same applies, gradually raise chest and shoulders off the floor and back down again.)
12-15 reps



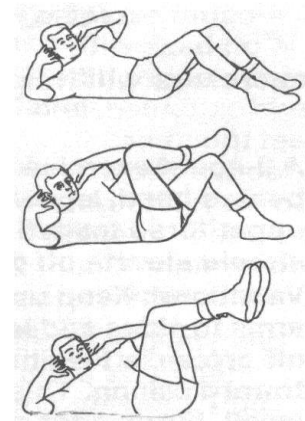
Calf raise



Squats



Lunges



Abdominal crunch



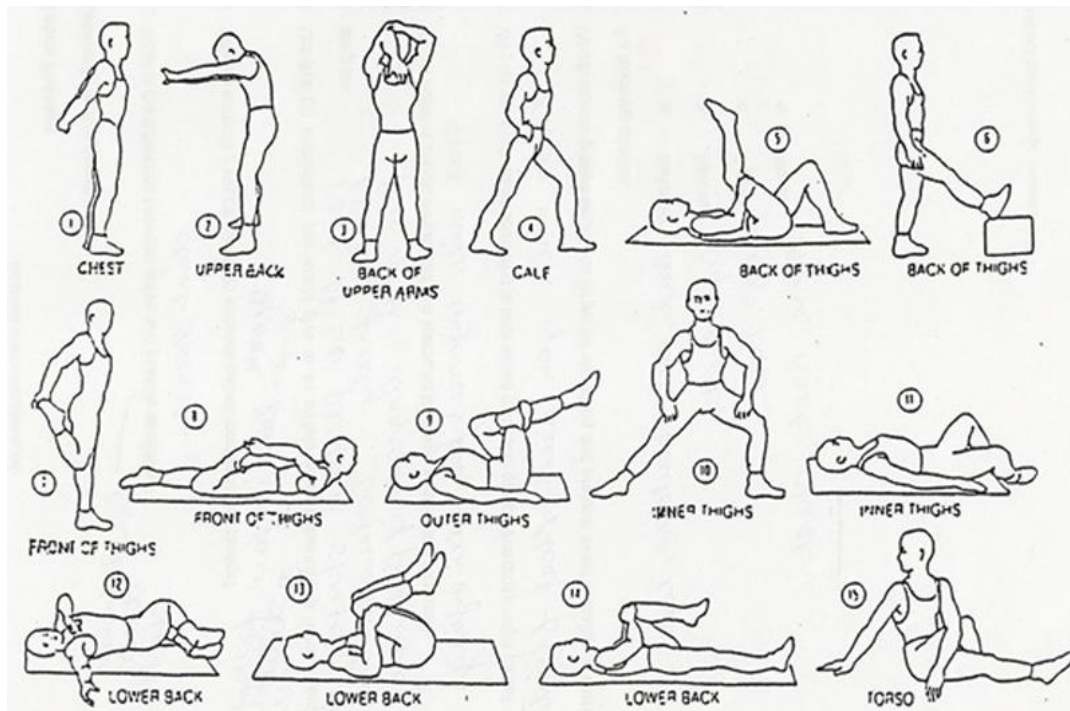
Back extension

If you have access to a gym, why not ask a fitness coach or personal trainer for help with these? They may even be able to show you some more exercises.

7. Be flexible

With all the training you'll be doing, certain muscles are going to tighten up. Don't worry, this is all part of the body adapting to change. To help with this stiffness try to get used to a post exercise cool down. The idea is to gradually reduce your heart rate to its resting state and to stretch out the muscles you have been using.

Try these stretches after you finish training. Get to a point on each stretch where you can feel a pull and hold for 15 seconds, repeat as needed.



These stretches may also be used during your warm up phase before exercise. Remember you shouldn't stretch cold muscles, so take a walk first.

8. Variation

Doing the same thing over and over can become very monotonous and demoralizing. Alter your routes, your distances, your speed, and your terrain. Not only will this help motivate, but the changing demands on your body will prepare you physically for what to expect from your challenge event.

Remember, you don't just have to walk. Why not try another activity such as swimming, cycling, or joining a gym? See if you can encourage a friend to go along with you. Taking up a sport may also be an option but remember, when things become competitive, there is more chance of injury!

9. Food for thought

The increased physical demands of training will place added nutritional requirements on your body.

Staying hydrated is vital to your body's ability to function, not least when exercising. Try to drink plenty of water before, during and after physical exertion. In large quantities, water can become bland so try fruit squash as an alternative. Remember, small sips often is the best way to stay hydrated and you should look to replenish with electrolytes.

On training days your body will also need more energy, especially if you are going to be trekking for up to 8 hours. Carbohydrates provide the body with energy and can be found in cereal, bread, potatoes, pasta and rice. You may also like to use energy drinks, bars and gels – these provide rapid energy and can be consumed on-the-go.

Your body will also gain energy and nutritional benefit from increasing your fruit and vegetable intake. Try to reach your five a day and be varied in your choices (and colours). Bananas, oranges, and kiwi fruits are a good place to start. Try replacing sweets with snacks such as carrots or dried fruit.

Proteins provide some energy but are also vital in repairing tissue damage caused by exercise. We mainly get our proteins from meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans and lentils.

The general rule is anything in moderation.

10. Enjoy yourself

This should be one of the reasons why you are taking part in the trekking event. Be sure to remember all the reasons why you are doing it – this will help in both the tough times and the good ones! Feel free to smile or sing a song.

Get a friend to join you – walking is sociable and it's easier to stay motivated if you have someone to chat to, joke with, and bounce off of. After all, there will be many people to get to know on the trek itself.

If you have any questions about this training guide or getting prepared for your trekking challenge please feel free to contact the Skyline Overseas Team on overseas@skylineevents.co.uk!