

Trek Training Guide: Challenges of 1-3 Days

Although walking is something most people do every day, you need to train for a trekking challenge. This training guide is designed for a person of average fitness and allows you to build up over several months. Be honest with yourself regarding your current level of fitness and start training early so you have enough time to improve before the event; you will enjoy the trip far more if you are not exhausted after the first hill!

If you already have a good level of fitness it probably won't take you as long to reach the stages shown but you still need to build up your trekking stamina. If your starting fitness isn't strong, allow more weeks than indicated below, so you can progress more gradually if need be. If by weeks 10-12 you feel comfortable walking for 6 hours on consecutive days, increase it to 8 hours, for example.

The more you do before your challenge, the better the chance you're giving yourself of succeeding ... and enjoying it!

Long-distance Walking: 12-week Training Programme

It's important to build up your training over a long period; this is a sample training programme that you can follow to develop your fitness specifically for trekking. Wear the boots and rucksack you will take with you on the trek, and if you plan to take trekking poles get used to using them while training.

Week 1 – 3:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	30 mins walk & Exercise circuit	Rest day	30 mins walk & Exercise circuit	Rest day	2 hour walk over the weekend*	

*On week 3 complete 2 hour walk on both Saturday and Sunday

Week 4 – 6:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	30 mins walk & Exercise circuit x2	Rest day	30 mins walk & Exercise circuit x2	Rest day	3 hour walk over the weekend*	

* On week 6 complete 3 hour walk on both Saturday and Sunday

Week 7 – 9:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	1 hour walk & Exercise circuit x3	Rest day	1 hour walk & Exercise circuit x3	Rest day	4 hour walk over the weekend*	

*On week 9 complete 4 hour walk on both Saturday and Sunday

Week 10 – 12:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	1 hour walk & Exercise circuit x4	Rest day	1 hour walk & Exercise circuit x4	Rest day	6 hour walk over the weekend*	

* On week 12 complete 6 hour walk on both Saturday and Sunday

Note on Terrain

Terrain obviously plays a big part in your training, and you need to allow for the difference between training on hills, and on flat ground. If your regular training walks are fairly flat, aim to walk for longer than the timings shown as you progress through the weeks.

Fitting training into your busy life

This training guide is just that, a 'guide'! With work, family and fundraising commitments you might not be able to follow it to the letter, but you can maximise your training time by making some small changes to your routine.

- Get up an hour earlier and go out for a quick walk with some stretching in the morning before work, it will get you moving and ready for the day!
- Walk to work if you can. If you travel by public transport, get off a stop or two earlier than usual, to walk some distance each day. If you drive, park further away, or walk a longer route from the car park to your office.

- Use your lunchtimes to take regular brisk walks where you work, not just a stroll around the shops!
- 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.
- Use the forum on our website to get in touch with other people on the challenge; if you live near someone meet up and train together. Or train with a friend (maybe they'd like to do the challenge too!)
- Try your local leisure centre or gym. You may be able to get a fitness instructor to design a programme specifically for you! Or make use of the treadmill and stair climber to really work your legs hard; make sure you get outside too though!
- Try to get to some hilly country at the weekends to experience walking on different surfaces, gradients and of course the weather. Varying the terrain you walk on doesn't just help your physical fitness, it also keeps things interesting, and you're more likely to stick to your plan!
- Try to walk some consecutive long days: you might ache a bit after one full day's trekking but the best way to improve your fitness and stamina is to go out again the next day!

Walking is very beneficial to your body and the best way to prepare for your challenge but you can add other activities to your training to improve your general fitness. Playing squash, tennis or badminton, going to the gym, cycling or swimming for an hour or more will improve your fitness and keep you interested in your training.

Note: Before using any gym equipment, please ensure that you are properly instructed by the staff at your gym / leisure centre.

Why Walk?

Walking can help:

- Strengthen your heart
- Improve your circulation and breathing
- Tone muscles and strengthen bones
- Reduces blood fat and cholesterol
- Burn calories!
- Reduce stress, improve psychological well-being

Walking Techniques - ways to avoid injury and discomfort

- Touch the ground heel first, roll forward through the arch, over the ball of your foot to your toes, which push off to start another step. This reduces the risk of shin splints and tendon pulls.
- Walk with your head up and eyes focused ahead.
- Keep your shoulders level, pulled back and down, lift your chest.
- Contract your abdominal muscles, pressing them towards your spine.
- Carry your arms at 90° angles and pump them forward and back, rather than side to side.

The faster you move, the better your cardiovascular workout. But try to keep an even stride and maintain a steady pace. To walk faster....

- Accelerate your arm movements.
- Take smaller, quicker steps.
- To prevent lower back pain avoid leaning forward and arching your back.

Footwear

Choose a comfortable pair of walking boots designed for the specific activity of walking. They should have a reasonably high ankle and a stiff heel counter to give lateral support. The midsole should be firm yet comfortable. It is worth investing in a good pair of trekking or hiking boots, and appropriate socks. **New boots must 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.

Feet first!

There are some common foot problems which are very easy to treat and avoid:

- 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 boots too tightly or too loosely. The irritation from the pinching and rubbing may cause blisters.
- Aching arches are usually caused by pounding when you walk. Make sure you touch the ground with your heel first and pushing off with your toe. Arch supports may help.
- Blackened toenails are caused by the big toe hitting the front of your shoe. Keep your toenails neatly trimmed. Make sure that if one of your feet is slightly larger than the other (as most are) that your boots fit the larger one.

Warm up

Before you start on a training session it is important to gradually increase the level and intensity of activity to prevent injury. Start by walking slowly for 5 minutes then gradually increase the pace so you are walking fairly fast for another 5 minutes. This should raise your heart rate and make you feel warm and slightly out of breath! You should then do a few basic stretches to prepare your muscles...

Basic Stretches

1 – Calf:

Stand approximately 1 metre away from a wall (or find a fence or gate if you're outdoors!), bring one leg forward with your knee slightly bent and place your hands on the wall to steady yourself; keep your back straight. Make sure your back leg is straight; you should feel a pull along the back of your calf. Hold for 15 seconds before swapping legs.

Calf stretch



Hamstring stretch



2 – Hamstring:

Step forward so your feet are approximately half a metre apart; lean forwards, keeping your back straight and bending your right knee. Place your hands on your bent knee to balance. You should feel the stretch up the back of your left leg. To extend the stretch, lift your toes up (as shown, left) – you should then feel a gentle pull up your calf. Hold for 15 seconds before changing legs.

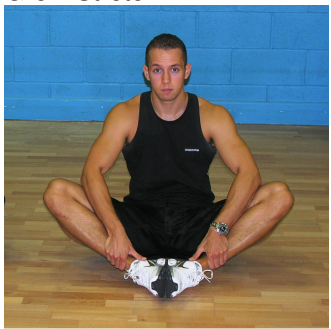
3 - Quadriceps:

Raise one leg behind you, take hold of your ankle and pull your foot towards your backside; you should feel a pull down the front of your leg. You may need to balance yourself with your free hand touching a wall or back of a chair. Hold for 15 seconds then change legs.

Quadriceps stretch



Groin Stretch



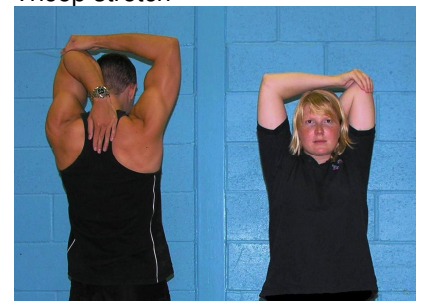
4 – Groin:

Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you. Bend your knees outwards to bring the soles of your feet together. Place your hands on your ankles and elbows on your thighs. Push your elbows down to increase the stretch on the inside of your legs. Hold for 15 seconds.

5 – Tricep:

Raise one arm above your head, bend elbow and reach hand down behind head to touch upper back. With your other hand gently push your raised elbow back to increase the stretch. You should feel a gentle pull on the underside of your upper arm. Hold for 15 seconds then change arms.

Tricep stretch



the stretch. You should feel a gentle pull on the underside of your upper arm. Hold for 15 seconds then change arms.

6 – Trapezius and Pectorals (back and chest):

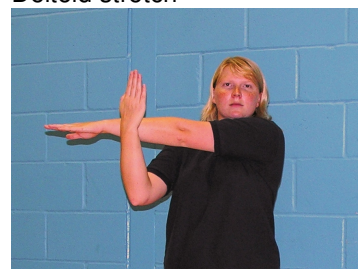
Reach your arms out in front of you and link your fingers. Tense your arms (as if you were hugging someone tightly!). You should feel the stretch across the top of your back and shoulders. Hold for 15 seconds.

Then reach your arms behind you and place in the middle of your lower back. Keeping your back straight, draw your shoulders back and try to pull your elbows together. You should feel the stretch across your chest. Hold for 15 seconds.

7 – Deltoid:

Take one arm across your body at shoulder level, keep it straight and use your other hand to pull it towards you. You should feel the stretch across the top of your arm and shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds before swapping arms.

Deltoid stretch



Latissimus Dorsi stretch



8 – Latissimus Dorsi (side and back):

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; raise one arm above your head; bend the arm over your head and stretch your torso over to one side. Keep your body in a straight line, don't lean forwards or backwards. You should feel the stretch down the side of your stomach and ribs. Hold for 15 seconds then change sides.

9 – Standing stretch:

Stand with your feet together. Place hands together and reach as high as you can; hold for 15 seconds.

N.B. You should only stretch warmed up muscles. Don't stretch too far, all you should feel is a slow pull, never any pain. Never bounce, always stretch slowly. People with old injuries or bad backs should be especially careful whilst exercising and stretching.

Exercise Circuit

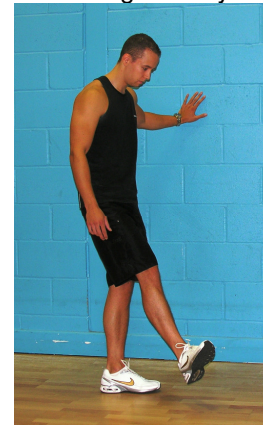
These exercises are designed to strengthen specific muscle groups and improve your general fitness and mobility. Before completing the exercise circuit you should warm up and complete the stretches above, then move through the circuit. The idea is to complete each exercise and then move on to the next. You can take small breaks in between each exercise if you need to (e.g. to have a drink!) but try to keep going! As you get fitter you can increase the number of repetitions of each exercise and repeat the circuit more times.

1 – Mobility exercises

These exercises are to loosen your joints and improve blood flow to your muscles; you can also add them to your warm up or cool down at the end of a training session to help prevent aches and pains the next day!

- **Neck** - Starting at the top of the body, slowly turn your head from side to side; keep your shoulders down to gently release tension in your neck. Complete 5 times to each side
- **Arms and shoulders** - Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your arms down by your side. Slowly, keeping your arms straight, swing them up to your ear and then backwards down to your hip (like a windmill!) to loosen up the shoulder. Change direction backwards and forwards and pick up speed a little – or to work on your co-ordination try one arm forwards and one arm backwards!
- **Hips** - Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, hands on hips and slowly rotate your hips in a wide circle, first clockwise then anticlockwise. Complete 5 rotations each way.
- **Lower leg** - Balance on one leg and circle your raised foot, loosening the ankle, five times clockwise then 5 times anticlockwise. You may want to hold on to the back of a chair or touch a wall if you're wobbling! Change foot and repeat. To improve co-ordination and balance try circling one foot and circling your hands at the same time!

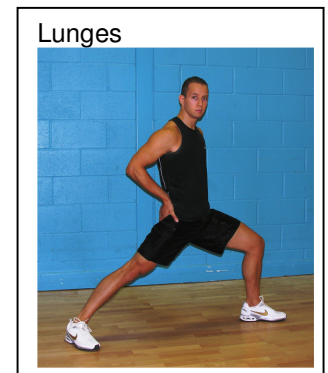
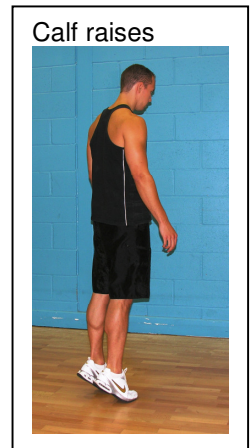
Lower Leg Mobility



2 – Strengthening exercises

These exercises are to help strengthen your muscles, improve your stamina and work your muscles hard!

- **Calf raises** - Stand with feet together, raise yourself slowly on to tip toes and then slowly lower. You might need to rest your hands on a wall if you are wobbling! Complete 10 repetitions, rest for 20 seconds then complete another 10 repetitions.
- **Squats** – Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; place your hands on your hips. Keeping your back straight and head up, bend your knees to 90 degrees and lower yourself down towards the floor; hold for a few seconds before standing up straight. Repeat 20 times, rest for 20 seconds then complete another 10 repetitions.
- **Step ups** – Use the bottom step of a staircase or low bench. Start standing on the floor, step up on to the stair or bench with your left foot and bring your right foot up onto the step next to it. Then step down with your left foot and again bring your right foot down next to it. Do 20 repetitions on the left leg, then rest for 20 seconds before changing to your right leg leading.
- **Lunges** – Start with your feet together, put your hands on your hips and then take a big pace forward, bending your knees so your front knee is at 90 degrees and the back knee is down towards the floor. Step back so that your feet are together again and then step forward with the other leg and repeat the exercise. Complete 10 lunges on each leg.
- **Leg raises** – Lie front down on a mat or soft floor with your hands under your chin. Slowly raise your left leg six inches off the floor, keeping the leg straight; hold for 3 seconds then lower. Repeat 10 times then change to your right leg.



As you get fitter, you can complete the exercise circuit more times – as detailed in the training programme. These exercises should get your heart rate up, make you breathe harder and sweat slightly! Make sure you drink lots of water to rehydrate after training.

You should also stretch after a training session to help promote flexibility and prevent soreness the next day! Go through the stretches above again, holding each stretch for up to 30 seconds. As the pull in the muscle subsides gently reapply the pressure to extend the stretch as necessary.

FOOD & DIET: Some basic info to get you started

If you know your diet can be improved, this is a great time to start. There is plenty of information on nutrition on the internet; or ask your GP surgery for information.

What you eat impacts on your energy levels, so concentrate on improving your diet as you start training. Fried or sugary foods, and too much dairy, will counter the training you have started to do.

- **Carbohydrate** breaks down to form glucose, which is stored in your muscles as glycogen to provide your body with energy. However, muscles only store a limited amount so you need to eat more carbs as your life becomes more active. Carbohydrate is found in cereals, potatoes, bread, pasta, noodles and rice.
- **Fruit & Vegetables** are needed for maximum vitamins and minerals. It's not hard to incorporate five portions per day. Fruit is high in fructose, which your body absorbs more easily than other sugars. Bananas are especially good for maintaining energy on a long active day.
- **Meat & Fish** provide some essential micro-proteins which help muscle development. It's healthier to eat fish and white meat; if you want to eat red meat remove the fat. Vegetarians should concentrate on maintaining a balanced diet, with plenty of iron, while increasing energy intake.
- **Increased Fluids** are vital: dehydration affects your ability to exercise. Drink plenty of water before, after and during exercise. Drinks containing caffeine do not help to prevent dehydration. If you plan to use isotonic (energy) drinks on your challenge it's important your body gets used to them while training.