

Cycling Expedition Training Guide

Training is very specific to the activity that you are undertaking. Therefore to become fitter for cycling, you need to cycle. 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 long distance cycle challenge, then this time may need to be extended.

Why bother training?

- You will have a far better chance of completing the challenge.
- You will enjoy the cycling challenge far more if you have a good level of fitness.
- You are far less likely to become injured if you know how to correctly cycle long distances.
- It will allow you to prepare mentally for the cycling 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 cycling -

- To avoid saddle sores, it is important that you have the correct equipment. Buying a gel saddle may help but you will still need a proper pair of cycling shorts. The best ones on the market now provide a cool max material to stop any issues with long term wearing of lycra around the groin area. It is advisable to wear gloves to stop any blisters forming on the hands and a helmet is always advisable to be worn. If you get any hotspots whilst training (a rubbing of the skin which then feels warm) immediately stop training and apply a blister prevention kit (i.e. Compeed) to the affected area.
- When cycling on uneven terrain, remember to keep the pedals flat when coming downhill and raise the pedal on the side you are banking into to keep pedals free of any obstacles.
- Try to cycle with your head up and eyes focused ahead, anticipating the gears needed and any dangers ahead.

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 cycling expedition that you will be undertaking. This, of course, becomes difficult if you intend cycling at high altitude or in a very mountainous region and you live in Lincolnshire. There are however ways of overcoming this. If you intend cycling on steep gradients, then find a nearby hill and progress from cycling on the flat to, once a week, cycling the same distance on that hill. Alternatively, book a weekend away to an area with steeper gradient roads.

From the outset you should attempt to develop a consistent cadence (the speed at which your legs rotate per minute) that you are able to maintain. This will lead to improvements in your aerobic capacity and will strengthen your heart and lungs. This will allow your body to be less stressed when cycling or exercising and enable you to increase the distance during the training schedule. To develop your cadence you should select the gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling on whatever gradient you are on. The optimum cadence for training is around 60 - 70 RPM which will aid the speed at which you become cycling fit and will increase your strength and stamina, which you can then build on. As you progress through the training weeks you will be able to select harder gears while maintaining the same RPM. As you become more comfortable with your cadence and riding position, you will be able to increase the mileage.

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.

The cross training, resistance training or spinning class evening can always be on the same day as the shorter 2 hour cycle.

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. If you are a novice cyclist, then use the 24 week programme to get into shape for your challenge; if you are moderately fit and a competent cyclist, then use the 16 week programme; if you are already a fit cyclist, then you should increase the length of the rides from 20 miles up to 50 miles and from week 1, start with one of the training cycle rides being on a steep gradient.

- Week 1:** Source a good cycle circuit that you are happy with and provides you with the best fit for your expedition. 2 x 5 mile cycle rides. 1 x 10 mile cycle ride.
- Week 2 & 3:** 2 x 5 mile cycle rides. 1 x 10 mile cycle ride.
- Week 4 & 5:** 2 x 10 mile cycle rides. 1 x 15 mile cycle ride.
- Week 6 & 7:** 2 x 15 mile cycle rides. 1 x 20 mile cycle ride.
- Week 8 & 9:** 3 x 20 mile cycle rides (1 on steep gradient). 1 x 25 mile cycle ride (on the weekend).
- Week 10 & 11:** 3 x 20 mile cycle rides (1 on steep gradient). 1 x 30 mile cycle ride (on the weekend). 1x cross training, resistance training or spinning class evening.
- Week 12 & 13:** 3 x 25 mile cycle rides (1 on steep gradient). 1 x 35 mile cycle ride (on the weekend). 1 x cross training, resistance training or spinning class evening.
- Week 14 & 15:** 3 x 30 mile cycle rides (1 on steep gradient). 2 x 40 mile cycle ride (on the weekend - use the weekend to see how the body copes with two days of cycling one after the other as on the expedition). 1 x cross training, resistance training or spinning class evening.
- Week 16:** 3 x 10 mile cycle rides. 1 x cross training, resistance training or spinning class evening.

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 cycle in the morning before work.
2. If you can cycle 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 cycle some distance each day. If you drive, park further away than usual, get the cycle out of the car and cycle the rest of the distance to work.
3. Cross training such as swimming, squash, badminton, running, walking and any other sport will also help get you prepared.
4. Joining a leisure centre is a good idea as the local fitness instructors may well be able to design a programme specifically for you using the many different cycle trainers in gyms. Most good gyms have exercise bikes and leg resistance trainers.
5. Book onto a regular spinning class and / or circuit training class to improve your leg strength and stamina.
6. Book weekends away with the family or friends to some mountainous region in the UK to experience cycling on different road surfaces with different gradients and in a mountain environment to test out all your equipment.
7. Book onto the Pre-Expedition Training Weekends in Snowdonia run by Expedition Wise.
8. Turbo trainers are very good, although quite expensive to buy – try out e-bay. They come in to their own in the long winter months as they enable you to train indoors on a “real” bike. It will keep you fit and get you used to the shape of your bike. Fluid turbo trainers are quieter if noise is a problem in your household and changing the tyres to road tyres will help if you are using a mountain bike.
9. Use your lunchtimes to take regular brisk walks or cycle around your work area.
10. You should make the time to cycle on some consecutive long days as on the training schedule. It is the accumulation of cycling day after day that really tests you on expedition.

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.

pre-expedition training weekends

Expedition Wise (in conjunction with Charity Challenge) offer superb tailored training weekends for all charity treks and bike rides from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.

Location: The training takes place in the heart of Snowdonia National Park in the mountains and roads of North Wales.

Accommodation: The accommodation is at Pen-y-Pass youth hostel at the foot of Snowdon. The hostel has a meeting room for all kit checks and discussions, a bar on site for the evenings and good showers and toilets. The rooms will be shared and the beds will be bunks in preparation for your overseas charity challenge.

Food: The course is fully catered with cooked breakfast, large packed lunches and 3 course evening meals served with a complimentary glass of wine. There is the option to relax at the bar on site after dinner or take a drive into Capel Curig for a further choice of 3 pubs.

Activity - Trekking Groups: The Friday evening will be a welcome evening with a meal and drinks. Saturday morning will look at equipment and then set off up Snowdon. The route chosen will depend upon the weather conditions at the time and the trek that the group are undertaking overseas. On Sunday, we will leave the hostel after breakfast, taking our packed lunches and trek up one of the other mountains around Snowdonia i.e. Tryfan North Ridge, Y Garn, again dependent upon weather and the chosen trek for the group.

Activity - Biking Groups: The Friday evening will be a welcome evening with a meal and drinks. Saturday morning will look at equipment and then set off up on the steep Welsh 'A' roads to Coed Y Brenin off road circuit and then back up to the hostel. On Sunday, we will leave the hostel after breakfast, taking our packed lunches and drive along the A5 to the Llandegla circuit.

For both activity groups, there will be plenty of time for questions throughout the weekend about the destination countries, trekking, biking and camping tips, high altitude, mid altitude and medical advice and any other issues that the group wish to raise.

Dates: Low to Mid Altitude Trekking Training weekends

- **Fri 16 Mar – Sun 18 Mar 2007** **Fri 10 Aug – Sun 12 Aug 2007** **Fri 24 Aug – Sun 26 Aug 2007**
Treks including: Brazilian Waterfalls Expedition, Dragon Mountain Challenge, Escambray Encounter, Etna Volcanic Adventure, Footsteps of the Maasai, Golden Triangle Hill Tribe Trek, Grand Canyon Explorer, Great Wall Discovery, Icelandic Lava Trek, Mexican Jungle Challenge, Spirit Of Sri Lanka, Thailand Jungle Expedition, Trek to the home of the Dalai Lama.

High Altitude Trekking Training weekends

- **Fri 02 Mar – Sun 04 Mar 2007** **Fri 23 Nov – Sun 25 Nov 2007** **Fri 30 Nov – Sun 02 Dec 2007**
Treks including: Andean Volcanoes Challenge, Avenue of the Volcanoes, Everest Base Camp, Explore the Inca Trail, High Atlas Summit Trek, Kilimanjaro Summit Climb, Simien Mountain Trek.

Bike Ride Training weekends

- **Fri 09 Mar – Sun 11 Mar 2007** **Fri 03 Aug – Sun 05 Aug 2007**
Bike rides including: Andalucian Adventure, Andes to Amazon Bike Ride, Cuban Revolution Cycle, Rajasthan Tiger Challenge, Saigon to Angkor Wat Bike Ride, Vietnam Experience.

Trainers: Dependent upon group size, there will be either 1 or 2 main trainers. The main trainers will be Brian Jackson and Ken Crossley. Brian is a highly experienced and qualified expedition leader, mountaineer and mountain biker, having spent the last 7 years leading expeditions to many countries in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. Brian is a Rescue Emergency Care Trainer, A Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, a Summer Mountain Leader, a member of the Association of Mountain Instructors and a trained Winter Mountain Leader. He is also a senior Kayak instructor, Open Boat instructor and Climbing instructor. Brian has led several Charity Challenge expeditions and is highly respected by Charity Challenge as an excellent practitioner and knowledgeable trainer in all aspects of expeditions, having spent over 17 years trekking in different environments around the world. Ken is a Rescue Emergency Care Trainer, experienced and qualified Summer Mountain Leader, overseas expedition leader and keen mountain biker. Ken has led expeditions for the past 6 years to countries all over the world and has also led numerous charity expeditions.

Cost: The cost is £135.00 per person. The cost includes accommodation for Friday and Saturday nights, food from Friday evening until Sunday lunch, complimentary wine with the two evening meals, public liability insurance, administration and all expert training and advice from Expedition Wise. All the training weekend dates will run if there are a minimum of 8 people booked on each weekend and you will receive confirmation of this at least 4 weeks prior to the date of the course. Cancellation is not normally an issue but oversubscription can be so please book early to avoid disappointment. Places are limited to maintain safety and quality.

Logistics: To take part in one of these weekends, please telephone Brian Jackson at Expedition Wise directly on 07714 155183 or the Expedition Wise office on 01978 756001. Once we have received your booking, Expedition Wise will send you a confirmation letter, terms and conditions, directions to the hostel, meal choices for the first evening, a full programme and an invoice for the training weekend.