



NEW ZEALAND PHYSICAL CONDITIONING GUIDE

New Zealand's Routeburn Track is 32kms in distance with altitude ranging from 600m to 1255m at its highest point (average walking time per day is 3-6hrs) The Milford Track is 54kms in length, ranging from 250m to just over 1000m in altitude. (average walking time each day is about 6hrs) Total distance we will trek is 87kms over 7 days, with a 2 day break between the two treks.

There are some challenging hills, but most of the walking is not too strenuous apart from the fact that you'll need to carry about 15kgs in your pack. So you need to be conditioned for carrying a pack over hilly terrain.

Most of the track is soft underfoot with some rocky sections, wet marshlands and bridge crossings. Conditions can vary greatly at any time of year, so you need to be prepared for all weather (including the possibility of snow)

In March the conditions are quite good but short rainy periods can still occur any day. Average temperature this time of year can vary markedly from 5-20C, so taking appropriate warm clothing and wet weather gear is a must.

Due to the necessity to carry your own food and the need for ensuring that you take adequate warm clothing and wet weather gear; it is likely that your pack will weigh somewhere around 15kgs. (You do not need to carry a mattress or cooking gear)

With all treks it is important to be as specifically conditioned as possible for the unique challenges that you will encounter.

In addition to the aerobic fitness required; the constant stresses and strains on the muscles and joints of the feet, ankles, legs, knees, hips and back require specific conditioning. Therefore you will need to be fit and strong enough to carry 15kgs for 7 days over moderate hills, averaging about 4-6hrs walking each day.

The following recommendations provide a guide to the conditioning you will need.

To start with, gradually increase the amount of time that you walk each day. Eventually you want to be able to walk for at least 6hours carrying a 15kg pack.

To build up to this over 3 months, you'll need to be careful not to over do it early in the piece.

If you progress gradually and listen to your body you'll get to the starting line in good condition which will minimise the probability of any problems during the treks.

Strength and Flexibility

Apart from having the endurance to walk for 4-6hrs/day for 7 days, you'll also need good strength and flexibility to avoid injuries such as sprains, strains and overuse injuries.

These can be minimised by doing some daily stretching and strengthening your muscles and joints by making sure you do a bushwalk or two each week with at least 5kgs on your back to start with and then gradually increase to 15kg a few weeks before the trek. Squats, sit ups, push ups are also good for improving overall strength.

Note: Quarter Squats on one leg while balancing, are great for strengthening the muscles that stabilise the knee joint. Stretching the muscles that connect the hip to the lateral side of the knee will also help to prevent knee soreness.

Balance

Balance is best developed by doing lots of bushwalking in the hills, especially tracks that are not graded and where you may need to scramble over rocks and creeks – the steeper the better.

Balance also refers to balance in your training. Make sure you intersperse hard and easy days and allow for adequate rest too – especially if you are out of condition.

A Word of Warning

Don't increase intensity too soon as this may lead to injury and you'll be back where you started. The last thing you want is to train too intensely early on and have to nurse a chronic injury while trying to increase your fitness.

Dealing with setbacks

The most common setback will be an injury or illness. The risk of this happening can be minimised by looking after yourself. Eg; having a balanced training schedule, good time management, being organised, making time for rest and relaxation, eating well and not abusing your body.

If you do have an illness or injury that sets you back a week or two, don't panic. Let us know about it so we can advise you and seek treatment as soon as possible, rest a few days and then ease yourself back into it.

Please see the following page for a recommended guide for building up your fitness over the final 3 months prior to the trip.

12 week Training Program for New Zealand Tour

Note: Leading up to the 3 months before the trip you will need to build up your baseline fitness for bushwalking – then focus on specific conditioning 12 weeks out from the trip.

Week 1 - 3

- 2 x 1hr walks carrying 5kgs max
- 2 x 30min recovery walks or bike rides (no weight)
- 1 x 2hr bushwalk carrying 7kg max – not too steep!

Strength and flexibility exercises each day.

Week 4 & 5

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 7kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 12kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 3hr bushwalk carrying 10kg max – not too steep

Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.

Week 6 & 7

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 10kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 14kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 4hr bushwalk carrying 12kg max – not too steep

Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.

Week 8 & 9

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 10kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 14kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 4hr bushwalk carrying 12kg max – not too steep

Week 10 & 11

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 12kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 15kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 6hr bushwalk carrying 15kg max – not too steep

Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.

Week 12

- 2 x 30min recovery walk/bike or swim (no weight) and early in the week.
- Have a massage!!
- DO NOT train for two days prior to departure – Rest, Rehydrate and Relax

For each training session - make sure you are wearing and carrying the same gear you'll have on the treks. *If you have an opportunity to walk in the rain, do so to test out your gear.

Tapering

During the week prior to the trip it will be important to back off, rest up and refresh your body, so that you are feeling recharged and ready to go without being fatigued or sore.

Only do a couple of short walks, rides or swims and have a massage to loosen up your muscles. Make sure you eat & drink especially well the week before you go and get a good night's sleep.

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