

TRAINING PLAN

This is a general guideline for a gradual and incremental strengthening of three different factors ALL crucial to actually enjoying this trip.

your ability to walk long distances (endurance),
your ability to go up hills/walk briskly (aerobic capacity),
your ability to carry weight (overall back, hip and leg strength).

Since the plan gradually strengthens 3 separate variables, most weeks you'll notice incremental changes in your activities. Sometimes one variable holds steady while others increase.

I am not an official athletic trainer. I have trained to race competitively and supported women training for this hike for many years. I've also managed to hurt myself a few times and learned from the recovery process! And I've been a massage therapist for a very long time and have background in movement analysis.

Nonetheless, if you have any questions or concerns please consult your doctor or an athletic trainer.

Every time you go out to train, decide what makes sense for you based on the cues you receive from your body. Be gentle and tender with yourself. Listen carefully to your muscles and joints as you move through this plan. They will communicate in the language of sensation - discomfort, mild pain, acute pain.

Learn the difference between discomfort and pain.

You will experience discomfort (sore muscles and joints) as you get stronger. But if there is pain, listen carefully to the pain and figure out what is needed. Listen and adjust your exercise plans accordingly.

Ease up for a few days or a week when things hurt! Really.

"No pain no gain" is not a useful strategy for this kind of slow steady training.

This is a 9 week training plan. But why not start now? Then if you encounter any difficulties you have plenty of time to figure them out.

What I've written here starts with 30 minutes of walking, three days/week.

If you've been walking or running regularly, scan through the weeks and start training at the week that matches your current level of activity.

Here's the most important thing:

If you only do half of this plan, you will manage just fine on the hike.

The better prepared you are, the more fun you will have. Its one thing to endure a long day with a heavy pack. Its quite another to finish a long day with a heavy pack and be able to offer help to tired friends, come up with great new dinner ideas and stroll about enjoying the wild scenery.

Nonetheless, it would be better to do only 50 % of what I describe here than to push yourself too hard and end up injured!

Week 1

(Get your backpack and boots soon so you can begin training with them next week)

3 days/week:

Start with 30 minutes walking at an easy pace in the woods or on the road. (If you're running already, substitute run for walk)

Notice how you feel.

Take at least 10 minutes after each walk to gently stretch (especially legs and back) carefully and slowly. Drink a full glass of water afterwards.

It generally takes about 48 hours for inflammation to reach its full potential. So be sensitive to how you feel 48 hours after your first couple of walks. Ease up if you're really sore. If you're at all concerned about the impact of walking on asphalt or if your feet or joints start to hurt, do your training in the woods. The trails are softer and the uneven surface is good practice for trails.

IMPORTANT: Quick distinction between "warming up" and "stretching". Before exercising it is good to move all joints loosely and easily through their range of motion. You are getting the blood flowing and warming up your muscles. AFTER exercising when your muscles are warm, it is good to stretch (not bounce) gently. Hold the stretch for 30 - 45 seconds.

Week 2

3 days/week:

Walk for 45 minutes. Stretch after.

If feet, knees or back are uncomfortable (not sharp pain, but dull, achey pain), be sure your shoes or boots have excellent support. Increase time warming up (different from stretching) before you begin (easy, relaxed, gentle, rotational movement in feet, ankles,

hips). Spend more time stretching afterwards - especially lower back, hamstrings, calves, feet, quadriceps.

If you experience any sharp pain, stop and figure out why! If you're feeling any significant, ongoing pain at this point, consider consulting a health care professional. Same is true at any point in your training. Do not ignore pain. It's your body speaking in the only language it has.

Week 3

Begin speed intervals and carrying weight. Wear your boots when you're carrying your pack. Don't wear your pack when you're doing speed intervals.

2 days/week

Walk for 60 minutes. Add in 2 speed intervals (1 - 3 minutes) of speed (faster walking).

OR

Add in 2 hills. (I can suggest great ones if you ask)

OR

Add in 2 bleacher sets (@ the HS track).

Go easy on the bleachers. Stay comfortable, go up and down 3-5x the first time.

Wait and see how you feel 48 hrs. later before trying it again. The steep bleachers challenge your muscles differently than gradual hills so be gentle with yourself. You do NOT have to do bleachers but they will make your up hill climbing much easier.

1 day/week:

Walk for 30 mins. Pack your pack with 10 pounds (bags of rice, full water bottles...) Ideally put something light but bulky in the bottom so the weight sits in the middle/lower part of your back.

Week 4

2 days/week:

Walk for 60 minutes.

Do 2 speed intervals (3-5 mins each) of speed/hills/bleachers.

1 day/week:

Walk for 45 minutes. Carry your pack with 15 lbs.

Walk slow and steady. Remember everything you know about good posture. Be sure your abdominal muscles are gently engaged.

Pay close attention to your neck, back, hips, knees and feet for the next 48 hours before walking with weight again.

If feet, knees or back are uncomfortable (not sharp pain, but dull, achey pain), be sure your shoes or boots have excellent support. Increase time warming up before you

begin (easy, relaxed, rotational movement in feet, ankles, hips). Spend more time stretching afterwards - especially lower back, hamstrings, calves, feet, quadriceps. If you experience any sharp pain, stop and figure out why! If you're feeling any significant, ongoing pain at this point, consider consulting a health care professional. Same is true at any point in your training. Do not ignore pain. It's your body speaking in the only language it has.

Week 5

If you're particularly sore, ease up in one of the variables (don't go so fast during the speed intervals, walk for less total time or rest for 2 days between workouts). But we need to know if you can carry weight w/o hurting yourself.

2 days/week:

Walk for 60 mins. Do 3 intervals (5 mins each)

OR 2 bleacher sessions (if you were okay with the first one, increase the intensity so you're going up and down 8 - 10x)

2 days/week:

Walk 45 minutes. Carry your pack with 20 lbs. Walk slow and steady. Remember everything you know about good posture.

Week 6

1 day/week:

Walk for 90 mins. Do 4 speed intervals (5 mins each)

3 days/week:

Walk 60 minutes, carry your pack with 20 lb. walking in the Grand Forest or Battle Point Park if you can.

Once you start carrying weight, it taxes muscles that may not have been used much recently. Go easy on yourself. Some discomfort is due to your muscles getting stronger. That's the good-sore feeling. Other discomfort is joints being inflamed or muscles tightening under strain. That'll feel a little more uncomfortable. If you're feeling the tightening or inflaming version, drop back to 5 lbs. of weight in your pack, drop a day so you're back to every other day and don't walk as long. Get a massage, stretch, go easy for 3-4 days, then start again at Week 4 level. Try to keep carrying some weight. If you simply can not carry weight, we need to find out now.

When you are carrying a pack, do not work on speed. You'll get some hills just walking in the Grand Forests but think slow and steady and pay careful attention to how you're feeling.

Week 7 Increase length of time walking with pack for endurance.

1 day/week:

Walk 2 hours. Do 4 speed intervals (5 mins each).

4 days/week:

Walk 90 minutes, carry 25 lbs. (don't exceed 1/3 your weight)

If you're ready for a challenge, try Fort Ward Hill to Toe Jam Hill.

Week 8 Grab a friend and do one 2 - 3 hour hike carrying 20 - 35 lbs

1 day/week:

Walk 2 hours. Do four speed intervals (5 mins each)

4 days/week:

Walk 2 hours, carry 25 - 35 lbs. (don't exceed 1/3 your weight)

Some of us will carry more than others so train up to what is reasonable for you (30 lbs minimum. Maximum would be about 1/3 of your body weight). There are lots of different ways we can support one another. Carrying more weight than is comfortable is not necessary and could result in injury. I'm assuming we will all carry different amounts. If you're feeling any slight strain or stress anywhere, hold steady at last week's workout or rest two - 3 days, stretch more, get a massage.

Week 9

Great time to do the Fort Ward Park/Toe Jam Hill loop with a heavy pack!

Day 1: Walk 2-3 hours carrying 30 - 40 lbs. (don't exceed 1/3 your weight)

Day 2: Walk 60 minutes carrying 30 - 40 lbs.

Day 3: Walk 2-3 hours carrying 30 - 40 lbs.

Day 4: Rest, get a massage, do yoga

Day 5: Walk 2-3 hours carrying 30-40 lbs.

Day 6: Take a long day hike with friends, carry your full pack.

Day 7: Rest

Include as much yoga as possible during these weeks. There is important overall strengthening of the whole body that can be achieved with yoga - much less the improved flexibility and range of motion.