



Physical Fitness for Backpacking Trip

Trail Facts

- **Length: estimate is 20 miles**
- **Duration: 4 nights / 5 days *with one zero-day**
- **Dates: 6/12 – 6/16**
- **Elevation Gain: an estimate of 3000 Feet**
- **Peak Elevation: 4170 Feet**
- **Difficulty Level: Moderate**
- **Bear Canisters: Not Required**
- **Pack weight will be around 50 lbs. (55 liter bag)**

Backpacking trips are physically demanding. Your ability to enjoy this adventure depends on your overall health and fitness.

A median-intensity trip warrants 45–75-minute workouts 3 to 5 times per week – start this at least 3 months before the trip start date.

At least three to four times per week you should be engaging in at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity of some sort. As you get closer to the hike, you'll want to increase this activity to four to five times per week and try to engage in activities with hill work.

The **best training regimens** for hiking in the mountains generally consist of fast-paced walking or hiking, that includes elevation gain. Few other fitness activities truly replicate the physical demands of hiking in the mountains with a pack that weighs at least 40 pounds.

Walking up steep hills and climbing stairs are both excellent ways to begin to strengthen your lower body. Start slowly, without the weight of a day pack. Then gradually add a pack filled with water, lunch, and extra clothes layers.

Once per week, you should take long hikes (2 to 3 hours) with a day pack on these hikes, try to move uphill without a break for at least an ½ hour at a time. Then rest for no more than 10 to 15 minutes. Then continue hiking uphill for at least another 1/2 hour. Do this as long and as often as you can. This is not the only way to train, but it is certainly one of the best ways to prepare for hiking mountains. Your pace will increase over time. If you are having trouble hiking for an hour at a time between each break, try slowing your pace. Try to maintain an even respiratory rate.

Unfortunately, many people do not live near suitable hills or mountains and must find other activities to build endurance. Running, cycling and swimming are all good ways to develop the aerobic fitness crucial for multi-day hiking.



The final test is to hike about 7 miles with a 40-pound pack and see how your body is doing.

1. Cardiovascular Conditioning (3-4 times per week):

- Start with brisk walking or jogging for at least 30 minutes.
- Gradually increase the duration and intensity over time.
- Include activities like cycling, swimming, or using a stair climber to simulate the uneven terrain you might encounter during backpacking.

2. Strength Training (2-3 times per week):

- Focus on compound exercises that target multiple muscle groups.
- Squats: Work on bodyweight squats initially and progress to using weights.
- Lunges: Great for building strength in your legs.
- Deadlifts: Strengthen your lower back and hamstrings.
- Push-ups and Pull-ups: Strengthen your upper body.
- Core exercises: Planks, Russian twists, and leg raises to build core strength.

3. Endurance Hiking (1-2 times per week):

- Load your backpack with some weight (start light and gradually increase).
- Hike on trails or uneven terrain for at least 1-2 hours.
- Focus on maintaining a steady pace and gradually increase the distance.

4. Flexibility and Mobility (daily):

- Stretch major muscle groups, especially your legs, back, and shoulders.
- Incorporate yoga or Pilates for improved flexibility and balance.

5. Rest and Recovery:

- Allow your body time to recover between workouts.
- Ensure you get enough sleep to support your training efforts.

6. Nutrition and Hydration:

- Maintain a balanced diet with an emphasis on lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats.
- Stay well-hydrated, especially as you increase your physical activity.