



Physical Fitness for Hiking in the Alps

Mountains around the world are physically demanding. Your ability to enjoy this adventure depends on your overall health and fitness.

The best training regimens for hiking in the mountains generally consist of fast-pace walking or hiking, that includes elevation gain. Few other fitness activities truly replicate the physical demands of hiking in the mountains with a day pack.

We suggest you begin your training program at least four months prior to departure, depending on your current conditioning. 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.

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 day 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 Alpine hiking.