



Getting Started: How to Choose the Right Training Plan for Your Great Wall of China Trek

We've put together three 16-week training plans for your Great Wall of China Trek and want to ensure you choose the right plan to help you along the way to your challenge.

It's important that you choose the plan that fits your **current** level of fitness, so here's a simple guide to help you find the right one for you.

Beginner Training Plans

For those taking part in your first long-distance endurance event, this plan assumes that you already have a general base fitness level and can already walk for around 2hrs in duration at one time. Following this plan will see you gradually increase your longest walk to 6hrs in duration and includes some back to back walking days to prepare you for your challenge.

Your walking speed will depend on your fitness level, the terrain you're walking on and of course the weather, but **if you can currently walk at around 20-30 mins per mile (2-3 miles per hour) then this is the plan for you.**

Intermediate Training Plans

This plan assumes that you already have a good fitness level and have been including good amounts of exercise and walking each week, where you can already walk for around 3hrs in duration at one time. With this plan, you'll gradually increase your longest walk to 6hr 30 mins with longer back-to-back walking days throughout the plan as you head towards your challenge.

Your walking speed will depend on your fitness level, the terrain you're walking on and of course the weather, but **if you can currently walk at around 15-20 mins per mile (3-4 miles per hour) then this is the plan for you.**



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Experienced Training Plans

If you already have an excellent level of fitness where you do regular amounts of exercise each week and can already walk for around 3hr 30 mins at one time. This plan will see you increase your longest walk to 7hrs with longer back-to-back walks throughout the plan.

Your walking speed will depend on your fitness level, the terrain you're walking on and of course the weather, but if you can currently walk at around 12-15 mins per mile (4-5 miles per hour) then this is the plan for you.

A few points to consider

- The Great Wall of China Trek is a tough endurance challenge. To get the most out of your experience, it's important that you do some specific and appropriate training, no matter your current level of fitness. Although you will probably include various amounts of walking every day in your normal life, the trekking you'll be doing will be at a much slower pace which will mean that you'll be spending on average between 5-8 hours on your feet each day during the Trek. We would therefore suggest that good preparation is key and will only add to your enjoyment of the challenge, whilst ensuring that your body is up to the rigours of the challenge.
- It's important that allow enough time to get used to spending prolonged periods of time on your feet, not only does this help your body get used to this amount of time being out and about (and it is tiring!) but it also has the added benefit of toughening up your feet and getting them used to your walking boots. Also important is that it helps to build your resilience to the aches and pains you might experience during your trek as well as developing the mind-set required to cope with the nature of the challenge ahead.

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- The core of your training will come from regular walks and over the coming 16-weeks these will build gradually and safely to longer distances and naturally faster paces. This type of aerobic exercise trains the energy systems of the body that utilise oxygen - don't avoid or neglect to include lots of hill walking (and/or walks over undulating terrain) as this is essential to getting your body used to the terrain and elevations you will experience during the challenge.
- It's great fun to mix up your training and try to find time to include some basic strength & conditioning exercises each week - this type of conditioning targets the body's major muscle groups, tendons, ligaments and joints to help prevent injury. You don't have to use weights for strength training; exercises like squats and lunges can be just as effective.
- When you walk, walk tall, shoulders back and relaxed and focus on your posture as you walk, keep your head up and eyes looking forward. Aim to be walking at a brisk pace and not as if you're just going for a casual stroll, but ensure that this is at a level where you are able to talk happily during your longer walks. As the training progresses and builds-up, you'll get fitter and stronger but meantime, if you need to slow down because you're out of breath then that's fine.
- Wherever possible and safe to do so, aim to walk on off road routes and paths with differing surfaces, steeper undulations and terrain - not only more enjoyable, it will also be helpful in preparing you well for your challenge.
- You'll see that the plans include more structured walks at the weekends when you will probably have more time available and the exercise during the week days is generally shorter in duration and includes cross-training exercise.



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- Consistency is key and it's vital that you listen to your body and the signals it gives you. It's important that you find some time to include some stretching each week, to ensure you're keeping mobile and flexible.
- If you feel any niggles coming on then don't ignore them, take a few extra rest days or switch to easy effort training to allow things to settle down; getting good rest and recovery is a vital component of any training plan.
- If you're feeling unwell, come down with an illness or are concerned about your health in any way, then we'd strongly advise that you get an appointment with your GP to get things checked-out right away.
- It's a great idea to keep a note of the training you're doing so you can review it periodically to track your progress. Why not keep a diary to record the training you've done, how you felt, your walking routes and distances you've walked. When you're feeling tired or when training feels tough, take a moment to look back at what you are achieving and be proud of your achievements as you head towards your Great Wall of China Trek.

Good luck!

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