



Cycling Expedition Training Tips

Our cycling Challenges are designed for people of average fitness, but you do have to be prepared to train! This should start several months before the Challenge, and the following notes will help you.

Before starting any training programme you should consult your Doctor

Remember - without training, you may not be able to complete this Challenge.

Training for a Cycle Challenge depends largely on your present fitness; age and the amount of cycling you have done in the past. There are a number of ways to train and the notes below should be adapted to fit into your personal lifestyle.

Beginners

Participants who have not ridden a bike for several years, or perhaps never, will have to start training at least 4 months before their Challenge. The mileage should be built up gradually to avoid over-exercise and injury. This is also to establish a good base fitness level on which you will need to build stamina for your Cycle Challenge.

A ride should be attempted every other day for the first 4 weeks and you should cover between 5-10 miles. There is no need to over stretch the ride by using a gear that's too difficult, or riding as fast as you can – all this can come later.

From the beginning, you should develop your cadence, (this is the speed at which your legs rotate - RPM), as this will improve your aerobic capacity, meaning your heart and lungs grow stronger and thus are less stressed when exercising.

In order to develop your cadence you should select a gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling on whatever gradient. Try to keep a steady RPM of about 60 – 70 as this will greatly aid the speed at which you become cycling fit, and will increase your stamina. You will soon notice yourself being able to push harder gears while maintaining the same RPM.

When you become comfortable with your cadence and riding position, it will be time to start stepping up the mileage. For the next 4 weeks you should attempt to ride 15 – 20 miles, 3 times a week, with a Sunday ride every other weekend of about 25 miles.

By now you should be enjoying the sport of cycling and your confidence will be growing. In the next 2 weeks you should try and maintain the same schedule but increasing to ride 20 – 25 miles, 3 times a week with the Sunday ride consisting of 30 miles.

The following two weeks should see the introduction of an extra day's cycling into your training, and the distance should be around 10 – 15 miles which will really help you get a feel for cycling day after day. It's now a good idea to step up your Sunday rides to 3 times a month and cover about 40 miles.

In the final three weeks your daily mileage should consist of 30 miles on each outing and your Sunday rides should break 50 miles. A week before your trip you could either wind down and attempt 3 short 10 – 15 mile rides, or keep the same training as the previous week.



Intermediate

This category usually includes people who have been cycling intermittently over the years – perhaps cycling to work, or regular Sunday rides with friends and family. As you have a degree of basic fitness and confidence, 3 months or so of training should prepare you for your Challenge.

The first 4 weeks should be spent introducing a regular programme into your training, and some thought should be spent in trying to improve your cadence (see Beginners section), which will help you develop your strength and stamina. A distance of around 15 miles, 3 times a week with a Sunday ride of 30 miles should be attempted in the first month.

Over the next 4 weeks you should be feeling stronger and you should be confident to increase your mileage – your cadence should be comfortable and fluent. The 3 rides a week should be covering about 25 miles and the Sunday rides should be covering about 40 miles.

The next three weeks should see the introduction of a fourth training day in your weekly programme – this should cover about 30 miles in distance. You should also introduce three Sunday rides a month of about 50 miles. By now you should be feeling comfortable with these distances, as long as you don't push yourself too hard.

The final week before your trip you could either wind down and attempt 3 short 10 – 15 mile rides, or keep the same training as the previous week.

Advanced

This category should include people who cycle regularly throughout the year - whether it be commuting 20 miles or more to work each day, or training seriously with weekend races or time trials. People in this category should already have a good training schedule and should amply cope with the Cycling part of your Challenge.

Participants in the commuting bracket should try and increase their weekly cycling distance by taking a longer route to work, and also doing regular weekend rides of about 50 miles or more.

Fitting your Training onto your life

All of the programmes included in this document are rough training guides. Obviously with family, work and fundraising commitments you may not be able to achieve what we have set out for you. However, in order to get close to achieving your training it is vital you organise your time properly. There are many ways to ensure your time is maximised even if you feel that you have no time outside of work.

- Organise your week to make sure you get out and do something!
- Try and get up an hour earlier and take a quick cycle before work.
- If you can cycle to work, **do so**. If you can't cycle the whole distance, why not cycle part of the distance and leave your bike at a bus/train station and take public transport for the rest of the journey. You must obviously be happy with leaving your bike in a safe and secure place.
- Use your lunch hour to take a brisk walk or cycle around the immediate area.
- Find some steep stairs (four or five floors in an office block or department store) and climb them five times, at least three times per week.
- Squash, swimming, fast walking and any other sport will also help you to get prepared.
- Joining a leisure centre is always a good idea as you will have access to fitness instructors who can design a fitness programme for you. Most gyms have exercise bikes where you can clock up mileage safely and comfortably. But, do try and cycle as much as possible in 'real' conditions. The more you train in similar conditions to your Challenge (terrain and weather) the better.
- It is important at weekends to get to some 'hilly' parts of the country to experience cycling on different surfaces and gradients.
- You should try and make the time to cycle on some consecutive long days.

Nothing will prepare you for your trip better than actually getting on a bike and cycling!

You may not hold fast to this guide, but you do need to keep it in mind and do regular exercise.

You will enjoy your Challenge far more if you are physically fit!!

