



HOW TO GET FIT FOR HIKING

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Iconic Multi-Day Hikes

RAWTRAVEL
ICONIC WALKS WORLDWIDE

Certified

Corporation

STAY UP TO DATE

We have a free monthly email newsletter that includes expert tips, new trips, destination insights and travellers' stories. Stay up to date by [subscribing](#) and follow us on Insta [@rawtravelhikes](#), Facebook [@rawtravel](#) or email info@rawtravel.com.



PLEASE READ ME!

The use of our information should be based on your own due diligence. We strongly recommend that you consult with your health care professional before beginning a new exercise program to determine how much exercise is safe for you. Starting an exercise program that is more strenuous than you are ready for can result in injury and serious medical problems.

Please read and adhere to the safety guidelines provided in the relevant **Destination Guide** when preparing for your trip and understand the specific safety risks we've outlined. While your safety is our concern, it's your responsibility to keep yourself safe on the walk.



HIKING & TRAVEL BLOG

Every month we share practical tips and advice about gear, training, preparation and what it's really like on the trails. These [Insights](#) are written by our [Destination Experts](#) who are passionate and experienced travellers and walkers themselves.

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HELPING YOU PREPARE

As Australia's most trusted and experienced walking company, we know a thing or two about training.

To ensure that you are thoroughly prepared and confident to take on the challenge and adventure of the best hikes in Australia and New Zealand, we've created this practical guide to getting hiking fit.

Walking for many hours over successive days carrying a daypack is likely to be very different from your current walking schedule, so we recommend you undertake a training program for at least 3 months leading up to your departure.

All our multi-day walks require a suitable level of physical preparation. For success and comfort, in addition to building strength and stamina, you'll need to familiarise yourself with the terrain you'll be walking on, use the correct hiking gear, and understand proper nutrition and hydration.

Whether you are preparing for your first multi-day walk or are a seasoned hiker, we'll support you all the way! Our resources and expert tips will help you choose a trip that's right for you, train appropriately, and complete your adventure with a smile and energy left over



Dave Reynolds
RAW Travel Owner





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Expert blog posts written by RAW Travel.

[How to layer clothing for hiking](#)



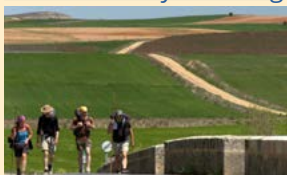
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[How to hike in hot weather](#)



[How to say goodbye to single use plastics](#)





WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TRAIN?

Multi-day hiking requires muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance and balance. Most hiking trails are uneven and have some elevation gain, so you need strength and flexibility in your knees, ankles and feet to avoid injury.

Give yourself at least 8 weeks to prepare, longer if possible. The fitter you are, the better you will be able to cope with the physical demands of multi-day hiking.

Something as small as a blister can be an impediment to your progress and enjoyment on the trail. Other common injuries from lack of preparation include shin splints, tendonitis, joint and muscle pain.

If you're not sore and over-exerting yourself, you can soak in all of nature's beauty each day and feel refreshed, renewed and satisfied at the end.

Being in the best shape possible can also give you an incredible mental boost on challenging days. Good training helps you to be relaxed and enjoy your hike, rather than being overwhelmed and under psychological stress from the effort of hiking.

HOW TO BE WELL PREPARED

- Spend more time outside
- Work on your fitness and stamina
- Test your gear in the worst possible weather
- Get used to the weight of your day pack on your shoulders
- Familiarise yourself with the safety risks involved, eg unpredictable weather, snakes, bushfires, limited access to water



ALPINE HIKES



If you are venturing into remote wilderness areas with high alpine plateaus, you need to be very well prepared.

Weather in alpine areas is notoriously unpredictable. It can rapidly change from sunny and calm conditions to a hailstorm, even in the summer months. Remember an alpine environment almost always means colder temperatures, so you need to be prepared. When the weather is mild or pleasantly warm at the bottom of a mountain it can give you a false sense of confidence for how cold it can be at the top. Always carry warm clothes for mountains!

On days when it is sunny you'll also have higher UV exposure the higher you climb, so be well prepared with 50+ sunscreen, a hat and clothing that can protect you from the harsher rays. At the other extreme when the weather is very cold or wet it's important to think about shelter on an exposed mountain. Where there is no artificial shelter available such as a mountain hut, carry a thermal blanket to guard against situations where you could get hypothermia.

The most effective way to train for the mountains is to find a hill trail close by. Make it your regular training base and keep walking it with a day pack, in which you gradually increase the weight each week. If you live in a city or area with no hills nearby then stairs are a great substitute. You can build up your strength very effectively by practicing walking up and down flights of stairs, be it outdoors or in a stairwell. Even the shortest of slopes or flights of stairs can build your stamina for the mountains if it's steep enough and you walk it up and down enough times!

Strength training is only half the training though. You can get fit on a stairmaster in a gym but it won't make you confident in walking on rocky or narrow mountain trails, so don't neglect training in similar terrain. The more you train outdoors on narrow and uneven paths, the greater your confidence will be when you hit the mountain trails.

Consider training with hiking poles – they'll really benefit you on your walk – and they come in handy when you need to navigate enormous puddles, rocky scree and slippery tree roots. They are in effect your third leg! Hiking poles take the strain off your knees, particularly on long descents and help your balance when traversing tricky sections. They also aid greatly on steep ascents and put all four of your limbs to work in powering you up a hill, giving you greater stability into the bargain.

Remember to lengthen your poles when descending and shorten them when ascending. On the flat they should be ideally adjusted to the height where your elbow and forearm is held at a right angle to your upper arm.



OUTBACK TREKS



Australia's Outback is home to some of the country's most extreme environments. You need to be physically prepared and knowledgeable about the environmental risks.

WATER

In this rugged, primitive, arid landscape, one of the biggest safety concerns is keeping hydrated in the desert heat. Don't wait until you're feeling thirsty to take a sip. Many people only begin to feel thirsty once they are already dehydrated.

You'll need to carry a minimum of 2L of water per day for drinking, check the availability of water and carry a good water filter that can use any water source. If you're not used to drinking a lot of water, use your training walks to make it a habit. On some trails you will encounter high temperatures throughout the year and humidity, which can also sap your strength and make you sweat more than an arid desert climate, so you need to regularly hydrate yourself.

Taking electrolytes becomes even more important in these hotter climates to replace the salts you have lost through sweating. If you are drinking adequate water but not consuming electrolytes, you could be susceptible to hyponatremia (a condition that occurs when the level of sodium in the blood is too low), which can be very debilitating and a real threat to your health. The easy answer is to take sachets with you which you can add into your water bottle occasionally.

HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES

It's important that you get to know and recognise signs of heat related illnesses before you embark on your adventure. Besides dehydration and hyponatremia, there are two major heat-related illnesses you should be familiar with: heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The latter can be life threatening, so you need to be familiar with the causes and symptoms.

 **[Read more:](#)** The difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke

TERRAIN

Train as much as possible on uneven dirt tracks and rocky surfaces. If you are walking on hard rock surfaces every day, your feet can get very sore and tired over multiple days if you don't have adequate cushioning in your boot soles. Gel insoles from your chemist can be considered for additional cushioning.

Gaiters are recommended for outback walks where the tough and spiny Spinifex grass can otherwise scratch your legs; they also give some protection against snake bite.



AVOID THE MIDDAY SUN

When walking in hot climates, make the most of the early mornings and late afternoons to avoid walking in the heart of the day. On a shorter day, set out early and be finished walking before midday. On a long day, set out early and then find a rest spot, ideally by a river or water hole, or at the very least some shaded trees or rock overhang. Sit out the hottest part of the day and complete your walk as the sun gets lower.

CLOTHING

It's essential to wear breathable, lightweight, light-coloured and loose-fitting clothing when hiking in the desert and other hot climates. Modern synthetics are ideal as they wick sweat away quickly and breathe well. Long sleeves and long pants are recommended to shield your skin from the sun. Fight the temptation to wear as little clothing as possible as you may end up with sunburn and at the least a very uncomfortable night's sleep. Test out sun-protective clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen – sunburn can be debilitating and sunstroke can disorient you.

TAKE IT EASY

Finally, when hiking in these hot or arid environments, don't push yourself too hard. Take your time, know your physical limits and stay within them. Drink and rest often, and always take advantage of any shade along your route.



COASTAL WALKS



The Australian coastline extends approximately 34,000 kilometres and includes more than 1000 estuaries. The unique landscape encompasses sandy beaches, rolling oceans, lush rainforest and vertigo-inducing cliff tops.

If you decide to experience a rollercoaster nature ride along one of Australia's best coastal hiking trails – like Victoria's Great Ocean Walk or Western Australia's epic Cape to Cape Track – you'll need to prepare for river crossings, long stretches of soft sand walking, and protecting yourself from blasting winds.

Classic New Zealand hikes include the Abel Tasman and Queen Charlotte tracks on the South Island. They are unique and gorgeous walks through lush coastal forest, historic bays, and along ridges.

Coastal walks may involve a variety of trail conditions, from clifftop paths to inland tracks through forest, heathland, sandy paths and walks across open beaches. The latter can be quite energy sapping if you are walking on soft sand, which may slow you down a lot. Don't underestimate the time and effort needed for beach walks and be prepared properly for exposure to the elements. Practice walking on a beach nearest you with your weighted pack to get a feel for what it's like to walk on sand before you embark on your trip.

If it's a pleasant sunny day it can be a delight to walk on wild beaches and one of the highlights of your trip, especially where you may be able to stop for a swim if it's safe. But if the weather is inclement – be it driving rain and wind or boiling hot sun – it can be a slog to walk distances on an exposed beach environment and both extremes of hypothermia or heat exhaustion are possible. The latter is a real danger if you are walking on hot days within areas with little practical shade as you can lose a lot of fluids and become dehydrated very quickly. Avoid walking long distances on days where temperatures are above 30°C. If there is no choice, use the early starts to avoid walking in the heat of the day.

If your walk involves crossing tidal rivers or exposed beaches then make sure that you find and check the relevant tidal chart for the area, which will show the times of high and low tides for the area you need to cross. If the creek or river is running high, do not cross if the water is moving swiftly and the water looks deep. Look for an alternative inland route or wait until the tide and water retreats to a safer depth. Similarly with walking across a beach at high tide, leave a safe distance between you and the high water mark. Many unsuspecting walkers have been knocked down by rogue waves sweeping up a beach and taking them unawares as they have walked too close to the water line.

Lastly, be very cautious about swimming on unpatrolled beaches, tempting though that may be on sunny days. Keep a careful eye out for rips and undertows before you get in and avoid going more than waist deep on beaches where you don't know what's underneath.



BUSHLAND TRAILS



Australia has magnificent bushland landscapes on offer.

For hikers, this means diverse and ever-changing flora on trails that wind their way through national parks, ancient forests and hinterlands. It also means the threat of bushfire is very real, particularly in the summer months when the danger can be acute. When you are training, get into the habit of checking bushfire alerts and using a map and compass.

If there are any reports of a bushfire near or in an area you are intending to walk then you must reconsider your trip and follow any advice given by local authorities. If you are walking in a bushfire prone area it is strongly recommended to carry a satellite phone or at the very least a Personal Locator Beacon and keep in contact as much as possible with friends and relatives who know your travel plans and daily location. Before leaving home, check the weather forecast and fire restrictions.

Snakes and other wildlife are both a highlight of a bushwalk and a potential hazard. Always keep a look out for snakes that might be sunning themselves on the trail and keep a safe distance from wildlife – don't be tempted to get too close for a picture or to get a better look. Wildlife will usually leave you alone if you do the same and hop or slither away from you!



NAVIGATION

The RAW Travel App has been designed to assist our self-guided walkers to navigate easily on the trail. Our walking routes are mapped every step of the way, and the terrain and towns you walk through are shown in detail. The App shows your position in real time. This means you can hike with peace of mind by knowing exactly where you're at, with no wandering off the route!

You can use your electronic device as your primary navigation tool, but it is important to also have a backup. Your phone may run out of battery, get wet or break. Or you may lose it. Always carry a paper map / guidebook in your daypack so that you have two reliable navigation aids. Do not rely exclusively on the App. This is particularly important on trails that are poorly signed.

Learning how to use a compass is a skill that everyone who enjoys the outdoors will find useful and can be essential if you walk in isolated areas or in more challenging conditions.

Confidence in using a compass comes from continued practice when out walking. [Trail Hiking Australia](#) has some excellent advice aimed at people who have not previously used a compass for hiking. Their information on knowing how to read a map is also worth a read. These skills are essential. Don't expect there to be obvious trail markers to define the way.

[How to use a compass](#)





Welcome to the Grampians Peaks



Grampians National Park is part of the Greater Gariwerd cultural landscape, the Country of the Jadawadjali and Djab Wurrung People. Represented by the Barngi Gadjin Land Council, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Miri Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Traditional Owners have a deep connection to the lands and waters of this landscape, and Parks Victoria recognises their ongoing role in caring for Country.

**Barngi Gadjin**
LAND COUNCIL

**Eastern Maar**
Aboriginal Corporation

**GUNDITJ MIRI**
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

Important updates

Bushfire, flood and storm events, planned burns and ongoing track maintenance can alter track conditions or cause temporary closures.
Please visit [Brimbak - The National Park and Cultural Centre](#) or call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 for up to date national park information.



Explore Victoria's diverse landscapes



GETTING STARTED

Getting physically prepared for your trip is all part of the experience and one that you'll benefit from long after you're completed your walk. Moderate activities such as walking pose little health risk but before starting any new exercise program we recommend that you see your doctor for a check-up, particularly if you have a medical condition, are aged over 40 years, are overweight or haven't exercised in a long time.

To prepare your body, we recommend you start a training program about 8–12 weeks out. If you do not have a good fitness base, a 12–16 week progressive build-up to pre-trip hiking fitness may be more appropriate.

It's not uncommon for people of good fitness and prior hiking experience to skip these recommended training periods but if you want to enjoy your trip without any aches and pains then training and a gradual build up and conditioning is the way to go! Even for relatively fit people it's a good idea to condition your shoulders for carrying a day pack all day – and your ankles and feet, too. It's better to gradually build up strength and resilience rather than suddenly subject your body to these physical demands!

To build stamina and strength, it's best to divide your training program into different phases. To start, you will need to build a good foundation so that you can safely go a bit harder later on. Our bodies get used to physical activity, so as your fitness levels improve you can increase the intensity and duration of your walking. Once you have reached your peak, reduce your training and rest.

When you are comfortable completing a number of shorter walks each week, test yourself with a 3–5 hour walk over hilly terrain through bushland. You might find it hard to get going at first but after a few weeks you will notice a big improvement, which can be very motivating. When you can comfortably complete a training walk of 6–7 hours, including rest breaks, add in a long-weekend hike where you are walking 15–20km both days.

PACKING A FIRST-AID KIT

For long training walks, we recommend packing a first-aid kit. The extent of what you pack is really a personal choice. Take items that have multiple uses. Improvise if you get injured. Your kit should include: absorbent and non-absorbent dressings, adhesive tape (surgical, stretchy), antiseptic wipes, bandages x two (sprains, snake bite), Band-aids, blister pads, emergency/thermal blanket, gastro-stop/rehydration powders and pain killers.





TRAINING ESSENTIALS

FIND SIMILAR TERRAIN

Train on terrain that is similar to what you will walk on. If your trip is on hilly, rugged trails, train on steep uneven trails. If your hike includes sand dunes, find a beach to train on. Use and wear the clothing and equipment that you will bring on the trail with you.

MIX IT UP

Don't limit your walking to prepared or cleared trails. Practise walking on uneven ground (rocky, muddy, tree roots etc), as well as uphill (ascents) and downhill (descents). There is a significant mental toughness required for long days of trekking, so make sure you include full days (and preferably multi-days) in your training.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS

A great way to build endurance and aerobic capacity is to train on hills. Bursts of intensity (uphill) followed by periods of recovery (flat/downhill sections) will help you to tackle longer, steeper sections with less fatigue.

RAIN, HAIL OR SHINE

Practise training in different weather conditions and at different times of the day. Accept that at some stage during your training you might feel tired, sore or cranky, but it will pass. If you are training during the summer months or during hot weather, heat exhaustion and dehydration is a risk factor. Make sure you wear a broad brimmed hat, long sleeved top, sunglasses, and high-factor sunscreen. Carry sufficient water, drink regularly, and take time to rest in shady areas.

DRINK LITTLE AND OFTEN

If you feel thirsty while out walking your body is already in the early stages of dehydration. Drink little and often. For longer walks, add powdered electrolytes to your water to help replace lost body salts and help aid your recovery. Day packs with built-in water bladders make it easy to stay hydrated and are a good alternative to carrying water bottles. They cut out the need to stop every time you need a drink. Being able to drink smaller amounts of water more frequently also eliminates that feeling you get when you drink too much water all at once.



TEST ALL YOUR EQUIPMENT

During your training walks it's vital that you test all the equipment and clothing that you'll be using on your actual walk, not just your boots, as you may find some things uncomfortable over long distances such as zips or chafing from seams. Get used to carrying your day pack on long walks and try a walking pole. Carry adequate water, nutritious snacks, a basic first aid kit and anything else you might need to keep you comfortable and happy, such as a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent or a jacket.

WARM UP AND COOL DOWN / YOGA

The best way to warm up is to walk slowly. Start off each walk at a leisurely pace to give your muscles time to warm up, and then pick up the speed. Afterwards, gently stretch your leg muscles – particularly your calves and front and back thighs. Stretches should be held for at least 20 seconds. If you feel any pain, ease off the stretch. Don't bounce or jolt, or you could overstretch muscle tissue and cause microscopic tears, which lead to muscle stiffness and tenderness.

STRETCHES / YOGA

A key to multi-day hiking is the ability for your body to recover quickly. Having good flexibility assists hugely in speeding recovery. Find a set of stretching exercises and start to incorporate them into your training regime. You will find that not only do you feel stronger, and recover more quickly, but the habit will extend to maintaining the stretching routine during your walk, which will make all the difference to tiredness and muscle recovery day after day. Stretching after exercise is the best time to stretch, not before.

Yoga stretches are ideal and there are many benefits to committing to a simple yoga practice each day on a hike. Poses can be done before, during and after your walk each day, helping to protect your body. You'll wake up a lot less sore the next day and have a better sleep.

MASSAGE

Self-massage and a foot soak are great ways to loosen tight muscles and get rid of lactic acid after a long training walk. If you search for 'self-massage techniques' you'll find lots of useful instructions, tips and videos online. If hiking soreness is a routine problem, invest in a deep tissue or sports massage. If you don't like the way you feel post-walk, invest time in working out what the cause is and fixing it. Listen to your body and adjust your stretching, technique or equipment.





WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR TRAINING PROGRAM

Start a training program at least 8 weeks from your planned hike. Gradually increase distance and intensity each week.



REGULAR, CONSISTENT HIKING

How much you train will depend on your current fitness and the duration/terrain/difficulty of your hike. Aim to do at least three walks per week. Whenever you head out for a training walk, take a day pack stocked with water, spare clothes and a first-aid kit.



CROSS-TRAINING AND STRETCHING

Include a few cross-training sessions, eg, swimming, gym workout/group fitness class or bike riding. Cross training, along with regular stretching, will reduce your risk of injury and keep the training interesting. It's particularly important for beginners who are just starting to build their strength and endurance.



FULL/MULTI-DAY HIKES

Add full-day and multi-day walks to your training schedule. The more training you do and the better prepared you are, the more you will enjoy your walk.



WEIGHTS

Although walking is mainly a cardiovascular activity, to keep going for long periods requires total body strength, so you should also consider a weights program that will strengthen your leg, neck and shoulder muscles, as well as your core.



GYM PROGRAM

If gyms are your thing, go for it. The step machine is great for preparation. Ask a fitness trainer to design an exercise program for you. This can make a big difference and you can achieve amazing results.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Plan a schedule and stick to it as closely as possible.
- Track your progress, wear a pedometer or keep a journal.
- Involve your family and friends on your longer walks or join a walking club.
- Mix up your training activities so that you don't get injured or bored.
- Include other forms of exercise, such as swimming or cycling.
- Be mindful of what you eat. Experiment with nutrition and hydration.





WARMING UP AND COOLING DOWN

The best way to warm up is to walk slowly. Start off each walk at a leisurely pace to give your muscles time to warm up, and then pick up the speed. Afterwards, gently stretch your leg muscles – particularly your calves and front and back thighs. Stretches should be held for at least 20 seconds. If you feel any pain, ease off the stretch. Don't bounce or jolt, or you could overstretch muscle tissue and cause microscopic tears, which lead to muscle stiffness and tenderness.

BASIC STRETCH ROUTINE

Hamstring (back of thigh)

- Cross your right foot over your left.
- Bend forward from your hips and keep your back straight and your hands pointing down towards your toes.
- Lean forward until you feel the stretch down the back of your left leg. Do not bounce.
- Hold for 20 seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.

Quad (front of thigh)

- Standing on your left leg, hold your right foot in your right hand behind your backside.
- Hold your stomach in and gently push your hips forward until you feel the stretch down your right thigh.
- Hold for 20 seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.



Calf

- Put your hands on a wall at shoulder height.
- Stand with your right leg forward, foot flat on the floor.
- Extend your left leg straight back, placing your heel flat on the floor. Don't bend your back knee.
- Bend the front knee and lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the straight leg.
- Hold for 20 seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.

Hips

- Stand with your feet at shoulder width apart and put your hands on hips.
- Keeping your head still, rotate your hips clockwise 10 times and anti-clockwise 10 times.
- Repeat 3 times.

Standing stretch

- Stand with your feet together.
- Place your hands together and reach as high as you can.
- Hold for 10 seconds, relax.
- Repeat 3 times.

PREVENTING SNAKE BITES

If you are training in the warmer months, you'll likely encounter a snake or two. Snakes like to sun themselves on paths and alongside logs. By walking heavily you can warn concealed snakes of your presence so they are not startled and don't lash out.

Most bites from Australian snakes are 'dry', but you should treat a snake bite seriously as venom may have been injected, which can be fatal.

If you are hiking in Australia, you should familiarise yourself with [👉 snake bite management](#) on the St John Ambulance website and make sure your first-aid kit contains enough useful bandages. This [👉 video](#) demonstrates the pressure immobilisation technique for snakebite.

As most snake bites occur below the knee, we recommend wearing long pants and/or gaiters as protection for lower legs and feet. Gaiters fit on the outside of hiking pants and hiking boots. While they don't offer 100% protection from snake bites, they can help reduce injury.

IF YOU ARE UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO GET BITTEN

- bandage the bite area firmly (without hindering blood circulation)
- don't wash the bite
- splint the bandaged limb (with whatever you can find, eg a stick) so it's immobilised
- stay still so the venom is not pumped around your body
- record the time the bite occurred and when the bandage was applied
- if you have been bitten on the wrist/arm, remove any rings, bracelets and watches
- seek emergency medical assistance

Australia averages only two snakebite deaths a year. Be cautious, be prepared and enjoy your hike!





CHOOSING HIKING BOOTS

There are many good makes of hiking boots. Finding the right make and model comes down to the fit on your foot. For comfort and safety, go for waterproof boots that have a good sole with good grip, provide ankle support and ideally are lightweight. Though sometimes a durable well constructed waterproof boot is often a heavy one.

If you are walking in a desert or hot environment you may choose to trade off some features like waterproof for lighter more breathable boots or ones with a mid-cut ankle rather than a full ankle. This is one area where good advice really pays off and it's worth spending the time to have your feet measured properly. You don't have to have the most expensive boots just the ones that are the best match for your specific foot shape and intended use.

OUR TOP TIPS FOR BUYING BOOTS





- Choose boots that are the right length for your feet.
- Make sure there is enough toe room. There is nothing worse than jamming your toes on the front of a boot when descending downhill.
- Wear the same socks you prefer to wear for hiking.
- Look after your boots – when you get soaked, dry your boots slowly.
- If you have worn the soles down to the point where there is little grip, you either need them re-soling or you need new boots.

BUY THE BEST SOCKS YOU CAN AFFORD

It's the little things that make the biggest difference. Don't match an expensive hiking boot with the cheapest pair of socks. Socks will make a huge difference to your comfort and experience. Trust us on this one; save money on other items instead.

There are many brands and styles available. Merino wool or a mix of Merino and synthetics are the best choice. Wool and synthetics regulate the temperature of your feet and will wick away sweat and moisture, keeping your feet dry and free of blisters. Avoid cotton at all costs as it will stay damp and smell badly! Merino wool smells less than other materials and can be safely used again the next day but make sure you air your feet and wash them at the end of each day.

Choose socks that are a few inches higher than your footwear to avoid the edge of the boot rubbing directly against your skin. We love these reputable brands:

-  [Icebreaker](#)
-  [Bridgedale](#)
-  [HumphreyLaw](#)
-  [Smartwool](#)





PREVENTING BLISTERS

Blistered feet are a common feature of multi-day walks, though they can be avoided with awareness and care. Broken blisters that are leaking fluid should be disinfected and bandaged. Small blisters that are not painful should be left alone because the best protection against infection is the blister's own skin. These will heal by themselves and will be reabsorbed in a few days. If you do have blisters, wash your feet in the evening to allow your feet to be fully dry when you dress them and set off in the morning.

The key to preventing blisters and avoiding unnecessary pain is to eliminate friction. Make sure you use good quality socks that you keep dry. If you feel a heat or friction spot developing, stop, take off your boots and inspect the cause. Apply a gel pad or tape to the friction spot on your foot or toes. The cushioned gel pad immediately reduces pain and promotes fast healing. You can even use them to prevent blisters.

CHOOSING TREKKING POLES

Trekking poles lessen the pounding on your precious joints and can help reduce muscle soreness. They will give you a feeling of security and balance on narrow or rocky trails and can help prevent ankle and knee injury on steep ascents and descents. This allows you to more fully appreciate the views around you. They are also helpful if you get tired or injured.

Trekking poles can be beneficial if you have had issues with sore knees, ankles or hips, or are not used to multi-day walking.

Trekking poles are not needed on all walks, especially if the terrain is fairly flat. They really come into their own on steep terrain.

Used correctly, trekking poles take between 10 and 15% of the load from your lower body and redirect that load to your shoulders and upper arms, meaning there is a more even load distribution over your frame. This will significantly help your joints, especially over an extended walk of several days.

If you suffer from arm or shoulder joint issues you may find that trekking poles exacerbate these. It's still worth trying poles, however, as you are likely to find the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Trekking poles are good for burning extra calories as they make you exert yourself more than usual but they will not make you fitter. There are no short-cuts to getting walk-fit, so don't use them as a way to skimp on your training.



WHAT TYPE OF TREKKING POLES SHOULD I BUY?

You can spend a small fortune on trekking poles but it's not necessary. Cheaper poles will probably be more robust, and if you accidentally leave them behind on the trail, you won't be so upset. There are 3 main decisions to make when buying poles:

Do I want spring-loaded for shock absorption?

Spring-loaded shock-absorbing poles (such as the original Leki poles) are heavier than the 'normal' ones and are a little trickier to re-thread if they come undone. They are, however, very useful for people with particularly troublesome knee or ankle issues.

What type of locking mechanism do I want to hold my poles in place once I have extended them for use on a hill?

You will need to adjust the size of your poles when going from uphill to downhill and vice versa, so you need to be able to adjust your poles quickly and efficiently.

Generally, poles consist of three separate sections which slide down and fit together for ease of carrying, but can be extended for walking. Overall, we favour a simple metal or plastic lever at the two pole extension points because they are easier to use with cold/wet/gloved hands and often simpler to adjust if they start to get a bit loose.

However, trekking poles with the original twist-lock system are absolutely fine when you get used to the mechanism. We are not huge fans of the pop-up metal stud fastenings. They can be problematic in very cold weather and are a bit fiddly to use.

How tall am I and how long do I need my poles to extend to?

If you are tall be aware that some lightweight/compact poles only extend to 125cm (or sometimes even less!). Look for poles that extend to 130 or 135cm.





NUTRITION AND HYDRATION TIPS

What you eat and drink is just as important as your physical training. When you are training, a good diet can help you get the best fitness results.

During training it's a good idea to drink water and eat snacks so that you know how your body responds to food and fluid during activity.

HOW TO SUSTAIN ENERGY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

If you eat a varied diet and regularly throughout the day, you'll be able to keep your blood sugar within the normal range, giving you sustained energy during and after training. Good nutrition will also allow your body to recover and repair each day.

When you don't fuel your body properly, your blood sugar can plummet and you can experience a range of unpleasant symptoms, from a mid-morning/afternoon slump, to headaches, agitation and crankiness.

Preventing a sugar crash is fairly easy if you take greater care with your carb intake and change a few other habits, too. Focus on including a mix of complex carbohydrates, good fats and some protein.

Remember also that exercise can drag your blood sugar down, so you need to compensate for some of the calories your body is using up.

Here's our tips to help you sustain your energy levels while training.

Start with breakfast

Include protein and a little fat at breakfast, both of which delay the absorption of sugar into the blood, take longer to digest and make you feel fuller than eating carbohydrates alone. Try pairing orange juice with eggs, muesli or a dense wholegrain bread with peanut butter.

Take the same mix-and-match approach to lunch, dinner, and snacks

Meals with a combination of foods will create a slow, steady release of sugar into the bloodstream, keeping you on an even keel. Choose lean protein sources like turkey breast, fish, chicken, cottage cheese and legumes.

Don't let yourself get too hungry

Going hours without food sets you up for a sugar-heavy snack-fest. Try and eat every 2 to 3 hours. Snacks like nuts with dried fruit are easy to carry and will boost and sustain your energy levels.



Stay well hydrated

Dehydration can have a major effect on mood and exercise performance, so be sure to drink water before, during and after you exercise to stay well hydrated. People require different amounts of fluids during exercise and the best gauge is the colour of your urine. If this is concentrated – you are not drinking enough!

If you have dietary issues such as diabetes it's important to understand how your body performs under physical stress. If you have particular dietary requirements such as coeliac disease or being vegetarian, it is best to prepare for this and take packaged snacks from home so you can ensure you have a good supply for the road.

CARBS, FATS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the key to sustained energy when you are walking on a trail. Carbs will give you fast fuel, so eat wholegrains before your walk and snack on boiled eggs, bananas, protein balls, or trail mix. Your body only stores limited amounts of carbohydrates, so it's essential to replace them. Plan when you'll eat. It's often hard to replenish carbohydrates once you've 'hit the wall'.

Good fats

You only need a small amount of dietary fat, so you don't need to increase it during training. Not all fats are created equal. Avocado, nuts and seeds are a great source of good fats.

Green powder supplements

In an ideal world we would all eat organic food, drink purified water and breath clean air, but because we don't there is a place for green supplements in a healthy diet. Green powder supplements offer all the vitamins and minerals of a multi but with added nutrients such as probiotics, prebiotics and disease protective antioxidants. Green powders were once the domain of health-food stores, but you can now buy them in supermarkets and chemists. You need to take the recommended dose consistently to get any health benefits.

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