

Training for Mt Kilimanjaro

Starting a program *now* is not too soon. If you are already in moderately good condition, we recommend you begin training for your Mt Kilimanjaro climb no less than 12 weeks prior to our departure date. Being in good shape for this trek is critical and will add greatly to your enjoyment of the overall experience.

The best way to train is to simulate the type of activity we will do during our trip. Most of our trekking days will involve 4-7 hours of hiking mostly uphill at a moderate pace. Recognizing that some of us will be coming from parts of the country that will be snowbound 2 months before the trip and thus may not be able to follow this recommendation, you will get the most benefit from a training program which combines long day hikes in the hills with some traditional types of training. Aerobic condition is the most important fitness factor for climbing, but you'll also want to develop a fair amount of muscular strength. In order to help you design an effective training program we have outlined below some general training tips and some specific suggestions for training activities.

General Training Tips

- Develop an overall health program and consult with your doctor prior to starting any exercise program, especially if you have not already been training regularly.
- Develop a training schedule and set training goals. Don't develop too tight of a schedule though – leave it loose enough so you can *listen to your body's needs*.
- Alternate short/hard and long/easy days in your workout schedule. It's well proven that training hard every day brings mediocre results and can lead to burnout or injury. Really train and push hard on your short days, and go light but long on your easy days. *Refer to "general aerobic training" below.*
- Make sure you include one or two rest days each week when you do not train at all.
- During the last week before our departure date, ease up on your training schedule a bit.
- Support all of your training work with a well-balanced diet and plenty of sleep.
- Focus on quality, not quantity, and use variety to keep your workouts interesting and motivating.
- Once every two weeks, include a very long aerobic workout at a comfortable but steady pace (general guideline is for this workout to be twice as long as your typical long days). You will get the best results if this workout includes hiking in your boots with an empty daypack at first, gradually increasing to a load of about 20 pounds.

Specific Suggestions for Training Activities, Intensity and Frequency

- *General aerobic training* (running, fast walking, cycling, stair machines, etc) – include some speed work and plenty of hills. You should be doing 4-6 aerobic workouts per week, and a minimum of 5 per week the month prior to our departure date. Workouts should be 25-40 minutes on your shorter but more intense days, and 45-90 minutes on your longer and easier days.
- *Walking with your daypack* – walk around your neighborhood with a loaded daypack while wearing your trekking boots. Build up to 1-2 hours per walk and up to 20 pounds in your pack (start lighter). Do this 1-2 times per week (you can count this toward your aerobic workouts).
- *Hill training* – Hike or run up local hills using trekking poles. On some days, go light with no pack. On other days wear your trekking boots and carry your loaded daypack. If you have a hard time finding hills in your area, use a treadmill or the stairs at your local high school stadium – boring, but effective!
- *Weight training* – select one or two exercises for each of the following muscle groups: shoulders, back, chest, arms, upper legs, calves, and abdominals. *Strengthening your knees with lunges and/or squats will be particularly helpful.* Doing lots of repetitions with low weights is better than fewer reps with high weights. You should weight train 3 days per week, but never two days in a row. If you are not familiar with weight training, seek the advice of a trainer at your local gym or contact us here at AGC.

These are only a few ideas for a training program. Since everyone is different we haven't attempted to outline an actual schedule, but this should give you enough tips to get started with your training. Good luck, and remember to have fun with your training! It really will pay off on Kilimanjaro