



By Kevin Jackson

It is often said by experienced hikers that the best way to train for spending time in the backcountry is simply to “go hiking.” This is often easier said than done, and while hiking does provide a great foundation for leg strength and overall conditioning there are several additional elements that should be considered.

For example, I recently took a group to Patagonia, Chile, to hike the Torres del Paine National Park and to explore the many glaciers of Southern Chile. This 75-mile loop is moderate in difficulty and provides a wide range of scenery in what has been labeled as one of the classic treks of world. With breathtaking granite spires, pristine lakes and iridescent blue glaciers, Patagonia and the Torres del Paine National Park are truly a must see. This adventure crosses several creeks, scrambles up rock gardens, and challenges even the experienced hikers with what seem to be hourly weather changes and katabatic winds so strong they can literally knock you off your feet. The adventure included seven days of backpacking around Torres del Paine National Park and three days of kayaking the Rio Serrano River. Preparing for this adventure required specific gear, understanding the climate and landscape as well as deter-

mining in advance the distances we would travel each day and the elevation we would lose and gain. All of these components were vital in preparing our training program. We knew what muscles we needed to train, the amount of time we needed to train, and what we had to look forward to.

Our training menu consisted of a systematic approach, not designed to get to the end in the fastest time possible but rather to adapt our bodies to the daily stresses we would encounter on this particular journey. The key to preparing for any adventure is “exercise specificity.” For the Patagonia adventure this consisted of strengthening the muscles used for lower-elevation hiking and kayaking.

An eight-week training program was prepared with a balanced approach that targeted areas of the body that would be utilized in our activities. The program was set up in three segments: cardiovascular endurance, strength training and muscular endurance. This progressive approach reinforced the use of the primary muscle groups utilized in hiking and kayaking such as back, core, quadriceps, shoulders, calves, hamstrings and hip-flexors. Exercises were geared towards increasing balance through core strength

and stabilizing muscles with walking on unstable terrain with pack weight.

Our training also incorporated stretching techniques for our primary muscle groups. Stretching the muscles that tend to tighten after long hikes with a loaded pack are hips, lower back, calves, quads, glutes, hip flexors, shoulders and hamstrings. These stretching routines are done throughout the adventure and help reduce muscle fatigue and lactic acid buildup. The Patagonia adventure was eight days in the backcountry, and the training program enabled us to have the most memorable experience with maximum comfort.

Adventure travel can provide one of the most rewarding experiences in a person’s life. People are inspired by it and often feel much more clear-minded upon their return to “normalcy.” Regardless of your adventure goals, preparing for your journey will enable you to have the ultimate experience. So get out a calendar, choose a date and start training!

For more information on adventure training programs, visit www.tstadventure.com.



TURRE

8~Week TRAINING PROGRAM

Weeks 1-2: Getting Started: 3x/week

- **Cardio:** 2x/week 20-30 minutes each, 60-70% MHR (maximum heart rate).
- **Crosstrain:** Walking, jogging, stairs, treadmill or hill hiking
- **Activity Specific:** Weekend hike w/10# pack

Weeks 3-4: Develop a Fitness Foundation: 3-4x/week

- **Cardio:** 2x/week, 30-45 minutes each, 65-70% MHR
- **Strength:** 2x/week, full-body, 20 minutes, 2 sets of 12-15 reps, 6-8 major muscle group; specific to kayaking/hiking/scrambling
- **Activity Specific:** Weekend hike with 10-15-pound pack, gaining 1000-1200 feet elevation.

Weeks 5-6: Build muscular strength: 4-5x/week

- **Cardio:** 3x/week, 45 minutes, 65-75% MHR; one-day city hill hike with 15-20-pound pack
- **Strength:** 2x/week, 20-30 min, 2-3x8-10 reps, full body strength, added weight
- **Activity Specific:** Weekend hike with 15-20-pound pack, gaining 1200-1500 feet elevation or 2-3 miles kayaking

Weeks 7-8: Increase Muscular Endurance: 4-5x/week

- **Cardio:** 3x/week, 45-60 minutes, 60-75% MHR; 1 of 3: hill intervals or stairs with 20-pound pack
- **Strength:** 2x/week, 30-45 minutes, 3x12-15 reps; vary exercises from weeks 3-6
- **Activity Specific:** Weekend hike with 20-pound pack; 1500-2000' elevation gain or 3-4 miles kayaking

• **NOTE: STRETCH FOR 15 MINUTES AFTER EVERY WORKOUT.**

Before YOU START

Like any endurance activity, approaching an outdoor adventure challenge with hard work and preparation will help to prevent injury and provide an incredible experience for you and your group. Though each plan is specific to the adventure, there are still guidelines that should be followed for every adventure — whether it's a 100-mile run through the wilderness or a hike up one of the world's tallest mountains.

Here are the top five things to consider when planning your training program and preparing for your adventure:

1. Gear. Prior to beginning any adventure training program, it is critical to understand what type of gear is required, especially footwear. Take the time to meet with a footwear expert at one of the many outdoor store locations throughout your area. And make sure you break in your shoes before leaving for your adventure.

2. Goals. Write down what you want to accomplish and be sure you understand the distances and altitude requirements for each day of the hike. These components will determine the level of training required and the duration of your training plan.

3. Weather. Understand your environment. Knowing the climate of the areas you will be exploring will help you plan for the weight of your pack and the type of clothing and gear you should bring. It will also help you to predict the condition of the trails.

4. Elevation. Understanding the altitude requirements is vital to the training program you design. Try to spend time doing some of your training in higher altitudes (above 8,000 feet) if altitude is going to be a factor in your adventure. Everybody responds to altitude differently, and it's wise to know if you are prone to headaches or something else before your trip.

5. Health. Consult a physician prior to beginning your training, and let them know what you intend to accomplish.