



KIMBERLEY PHYSICAL CONDITIONING GUIDE

The Kimberley region is one of the most remarkable yet least explored parts of Australia. It is a hidden world of deep gorges, rugged escarpments and plateaus, interspersed with cascading waterfalls and breathtaking scenery.

Our journey includes a 4 day trek along dry river beds, over rugged ridges, through Spinifex grass, sometimes exposed to the sun and other times under the canopy of eucalypt forests. Distance walked each day will vary from 6 – 13kms on average.

The trek is followed by an easy paddle along the slow moving waters of the Ord River over 3 days. The climate is mostly warm and humid during July, with the occasional thunderstorm and rain but mostly dry and an average temperature of 28 degrees C.

Average pack weight for trekkers is usually 12-13kgs + 2-3kgs of water, so you will need to be fit to carry about 15kg. There is one day when you may need to carry extra water depending on water availability and conditions.

With all treks it is important to be as specifically conditioned as possible for the challenges that you will encounter. This trek is no different and has unique challenges in terms of the rugged terrain which is hard under foot, the warm and humid conditions which can increase your risk of dehydration and the additional challenge of carrying your own pack.

Apart from the aerobic fitness required to walk 6-13kms each day; the constant stresses and strains on the muscles and joints of the feet, ankles, legs, knees, hips and back will require specific conditioning. Therefore you will need to be fit and strong enough to carry about 15kgs for 4 days over moderate hills, averaging about 4-5hrs walking each day. The paddling will be relatively easy as we flow with the river but some swimming and core strength exercises will be helpful in addition to bushwalking with a pack.

The following recommendations provide a guide to the conditioning you will need.

To start with, gradually increase the amount of time that you walk each day. Eventually you will want to be able to walk for at least 4 hours carrying a 15kg pack.

To build up to this between now and the trip, you will need to be careful not to over do it early in the piece.

If you progress gradually and listen to your body you'll get to the starting line in good nick which will minimise the probability of any problems during the trek.

Strength and Flexibility

Apart from having the endurance to walk for 4-5hrs a day for 4 days, you'll also need good strength and flexibility to avoid injuries such as sprains, strains and overuse injuries. These can be minimised by doing some daily stretching and strengthening your muscles and joints by making sure you do a bushwalk or two each week with at least 10kgs on your back to start with and then gradually increase to 15kg a few months before the trek. Squats, sit ups, push ups are also good for improving overall strength.

Note: Quarter Squats on one leg while balancing, are great for strengthening the muscles that stabilise the knee joint. Stretching the muscles that connect the hip to the lateral side of the knee will also help to prevent knee soreness. (see Wayne for tips on stretching)

Balance

Balance is best developed by doing lots of bushwalking in the hills, especially tracks that are not graded and where you may need to scramble over rocks and creeks.

Balance also refers to balance in your training. Make sure you intersperse hard and easy days and allow for adequate rest too – especially if you are out of condition.

Conditioning for Paddling

The canoe phase of this trip is not particularly strenuous but will require good core strength (stable abdominal & back muscles) as well as muscular endurance in the arms and shoulders; so the best way to condition your body for this would be a combination of paddling, swimming, pilates or yoga; together with some daily strength & flexibility exercises eg; situps, pushups, dips & squats (see Wayne for more information)

A Word of Warning

Don't increase intensity too soon as this may lead to injury and you'll be back where you started. The last thing you want is to train too intensely early on and have to nurse a chronic injury while trying to increase your fitness.

Dealing with setbacks

The most common setback will be an injury or illness. The risk of this happening can be minimised by looking after yourself eg; having a balanced training schedule, good time management, being organised, making time for rest and relaxation, eating well and not abusing your body.

If you do have an illness or injury that sets you back a week or two, don't panic. Seek treatment as soon as possible, rest a few days and then ease yourself back into it.

On the following page we provide a 12 week Training Program which can be used to focus your training for the 3 months prior to the trip. Between now and then the focus should be on developing your aerobic fitness with regular walking, running, cycling, swimming etc. Walking is best because it is specific to the activity you will be doing; particularly bushwalking, including a few moderate hills to begin with.

Other activities for core strength mentioned above are also good to do in the build up phase of your preparation. You should be already at the level of 'Week 1' of the 12 Week Program by the time you start it.

Disclaimer

These guidelines are general recommendations for the average person who is reasonably fit and not suffering from any significant medical conditions or injuries that could be aggravated by bushwalking. If you have specific medical conditions or injuries that could be aggravated by following these recommendations, it is your responsibility to get a clearance by your doctor before commencing any training.

12 week Training Program for Kimberley Adventure

Week 1 - 3

- 2 x 1hr walks carrying 7kgs max
- 2 x 30min recovery walks or bike rides (no weight)
- 1 x 2hr bushwalk carrying 10kg max – not too steep!

****Strength and flexibility exercises each day.***

Week 4 & 5

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 10kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 12kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 3hr bushwalk carrying 10kg max – not too steep

****Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.***

Week 6 & 7

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 12kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 15kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 4hr bushwalk carrying 12kg max – not too steep

****Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.***

Week 8 & 9

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 15kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 15kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 4hr bushwalk carrying 15kg max – not too steep

****Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day + 30mins of swimming x 2/wk***

Week 10 & 11

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 15kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 18kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 5hr bushwalk carrying 15kg max – not too steep

****Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day + 30mins of swimming x 2/wk***

Week 12

- 2 x 30min recovery walk/bike or swim (no weight) and early in the week.
- Have a massage!!
- DO NOT train for two days prior to departure – Rest, Rehydrate and Relax

For each training session - make sure you are wearing and carrying the same gear you'll have on the trek.

***If you have an opportunity to walk in the rain, do so to test out your gear.**

Tapering

During the week prior to the trek it will be important to back off, rest up and refresh your body, so that you are feeling recharged and ready to go without being fatigued or sore.

Only do a couple of short walks, rides or swims and have a massage to loosen up your muscles.

Make sure you eat & drink especially well the week before you go and get a good night's sleep.

After doing the trek you'll be fit for the canoeing but it would help to do some swimming during the month leading up to the trip, to condition your arms and back for paddling!

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