



TASSIE PHYSICAL CONDITIONING GUIDE

Tasmania's Overland Track is approximately 65kms in distance, averaging approximately 10kms of walking each day (between 4-7hrs duration/day).

Altitude varies between 700m and 1250m over the length of the track with most climbs in one day being less than 300m. The hills are fairly moderate compared with those of the Kokoda Track (unless you want to climb Mt Ossa which is 1600m above sea level and is a 3hr return trip of 5kms from the main track – 500m climb)

Most of the track is soft underfoot or covered by boardwalk to protect the fragile vegetation. Conditions can vary greatly in spring time but weather should be becoming more stable by the end of November.

At this time of year the average number of rain days per month is 15-20, so there is a high likelihood of some rain and a possibility of snow, especially near the start of the trek around Cradle Mountain which is the highest point on the track.

Average temperature this time of year is 10-15degrees, so taking appropriate warm clothing and wet weather gear is a must.

This trek is predominantly in cool conditions compared with the tropical conditions of the Kokoda Track. On the Kokoda Track & Inca Trail there is the optional luxury of having porter support. On the Overland Track you have no option but to carry your own pack. Due to the necessity to carry your own food and cooking gear and the need for ensuring that you take adequate warm clothing and wet weather gear; it is likely that your pack will weigh somewhere between 15 – 20kgs.

With all treks it is important to be as specifically conditioned as possible for the unique challenges that you will encounter.

In addition to the aerobic fitness required; the constant stresses and strains on the muscles and joints of the feet, ankles, legs, knees, hips and back require specific conditioning. Therefore you will need to be fit and strong enough to carry 20kgs for 6 days over moderate hills, averaging about 6hrs walking each day.

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 want to be able to walk for at least 5 hours carrying a 15-20kg pack.

To build up to this over the next 3 months, you'll 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 6hrs a day for 6 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 and then try 20kg a few weeks 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.

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 – the steeper the better.

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 Rafting

Rafting is not particularly strenuous but does 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.

12 week Training Program for Tassie Tour

Note: Leading up to the 3 months before the trip you will need to build up your baseline fitness for bushwalking – then focus on specific conditioning 12 weeks out from the trip.

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 15kg 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 15kg 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 18kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 4hr bushwalk carrying 18kg max – not too steep

Week 10 & 11

- 2 x 2hr walks carrying 15kgs max
- 2 x 45min walks carrying 18kg max – no steep hills!
- 1 x 6hr bushwalk carrying 20kg max – not too steep

Keep doing strength and flexibility exercises each day.

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 track. *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 plenty fit for the Franklin River but it would help to do some swimming to condition your arms and back a bit for paddling!

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