

Trail-Tough Training

Star the training program at least 4 weeks in advance of the trip. If you are out of shape, start at least 8 weeks prior and start small, hiking or jogging 15 minutes per session the first week. Stretch well.

Week 1: Monday

Cardio, 30 min. Walk or jog stadium or office stairs. Attend a step class or run a course with rolling hills, carrying a 5 to 10 pound pack.

Tuesday

Trail training. Any lower body weight lifting will help build strength and prevent sourness. Start with 1 or 2 sets of 10 reps of each exercise.

Wednesday

Rest

Thursday

Trail Training. To mimic downhill, do lunges on a parking garage ramp or hill. Extend one leg forward: drop the back knee almost to the ground. Repeat uphill and across the slope. 2 sets of 10 reps.

Friday

Repeat Monday's workout.

Week 2: Monday

Cardio, 45 min. Stairs or hills. Add 5 pounds to the pack.

Tuesday

Trail training. Any lower body weight lifting. 2 or 3 sets of 10 reps. Add balance exercises on a wobble board to strengthen ankles for hiking on uneven terrain.

Wednesday

Rest

Thursday

Trail training. Use a step stool at home to practice larger steps with a 5 to 10 pound pack. Alternate stepping up and down slowly, making sure your hips, knees and ankles are aligned. 2 or 3 sets of 10 reps.

Friday

Repeat Mondays Workout

Week 3: Monday

Cardio, 60 minutes. Stairs or hills. Add another 5 pounds to the pack.

Tuesday

Trail training. Lower body weight lifting, 3 or 4 sets of 10 reps. Add core strength exercises such as sit-ups or crunches, which improves your overall balance on the trail.

Wednesday

Rest

Thursday

Trail Training. Try squats with a 5 to 10 pound pack. Stand with your feet apart, bend your knees and lower your butt as if you're sitting down. Keep your back straight and repeat for 2 or 3 sets of 10 squats.

Friday

Repeat Mondays Workout

Week 4:

Monday

Cardio, 60 to 90 minutes. Stairs or hills. Add another 5 pounds to the pack.

Tuesday

Trail Training, Lower body, ankles and core. 4 or 56 sets of 10 reps.

Wednesday

Rest

Thursday

Trail Training. Lunges, steps and squats with a 15 to 20 pound pack.

Friday

Repeat Monday's workout.

Strengthen your knees

You should strengthen the muscles surrounding your knees, but also your ankles, shoulders, and stomach.

Lunges, Squats, and Stomach crunches 3 times a week

Do 3 sets of as many quality reps as you can manage with a minute rest between.

Supercharge your legs

Balance on dicey trails

The best way to beef up your calves and sharpen your balance is with step-ups and step-downs. Hold a dumbbell in each hand and stand in front of an 8 to 16 inches high box or step. Take a step up onto the box and come back down, landing on the ball of your foot. Work up to three sets of 10 to 12 reps on each leg.

Dead legs after a day of Hiking

Stand with a barbell resting across your shoulders and slowly bend your knees until your thighs are parallel with the ground. Slowly straighten your legs. Do three sets of 10 to 12 reps.

Lunges work on everything and you can do them anywhere. Take an exaggerated step forward and bend both knees to about 90 degrees. Push off the front foot and return to the starting position. Repeat with the opposite leg. Try 10 to 12 reps and increased to three sets with small hand weights.

Building a Better Back

Sit-Ups

When the stomach is weak, the lower back tends to overcompensate. The key to the sit-up is a 1-to-2 ratio. If you take 1 second to sit up, take 2 seconds to go back down. Really emphasis coming back down slowly and not just falling. Perform these at least 3 days a week and work up to two sets of 20 to 30 reps.

Adding a twist to Sit-ups.

Challenge yourself by adding a twist to your sit-ups as you come to the top. Twist from side to side at the top and come back down. Targets the abs and obliques, which support your lower back and help the balance.

The Swimmer

Lie on your stomach, arms out to side and bent at the elbows. Squeeze your glutes and lift your legs a few inches off the ground. Lift your Chest slightly while you look straight ahead. Hold this position as you move your arms about 6 inches back and forth. Keep your butt tight to prevent back injury and to keep core muscles engaged. Works: entire back, glutes, quads.

Push-Ups to Plank

Here is a simple twist on the old standby. Do as many push-ups as you can until muscle failure, then go immediately into a plank hold by resting on your forearms and hold for 30 seconds. Build to 45 seconds, then 60. Keep you glutes and abs clenched to ensure the core muscles are active. Works: Chest, arms, back, abdominals, glutes, thighs