

# **Cycling Training guide**

We cannot stress enough just how important getting yourself in shape will be; good preparation will make your cycle a far more enjoyable experience. Whilst you still have plenty of time to train, your challenge will come round soon enough, therefore it is vital that you begin to make small changes soon.

This guide sets out to offer advice and support as you set out on your training preparations, though is by no means the be all and end all of cycling abroad! Remember, always consult your doctor before undertaking any new exercise plan, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

## **10 tips to cycling, an all round guide**

### **1. Just get on and go!**

It's that simple right? Well nearly. Whilst most of us will have some cycling experience, cycling for many days in a row can start to cause problems. To reduce these risks, you'll need to gradually build up your time in the saddle. Try to maintain a cadence (leg speed) at 60-70 rpm – this is where selecting the appropriate gear comes in handy! When you feel your legs tiring, simply select an easier gear until they recover. The more you train, the longer you'll be able to cycle before your legs tire.

Do you really need all that in your day bag?! Heavy rucksacks can lead to back problems – a 'bumbag' will hold your camera, phone, suncream and energy bars, whilst your water bottles can be carried on the bike. Remember lights and high visibility clothing if cycling at night.

### **2. Listen to your body**

Soon you'll feel fitter and have more energy. But should you start to feel pains during or after a cycle, take time off and rest - don't let a niggle become an injury. Seek medical advice if unsure. Injuries are most commonly caused by using inappropriate equipment, or going too far or too fast too soon.

Choosing the right equipment can make the difference between a great trip and a trip to the doctor -don't be afraid to invest! Be comfortable in your cycling helmet, shorts (padded) and gloves. You may wish to use straps or clip-in pedals for even more power - if so, ensure you practice with these.

### 3. Getting it right

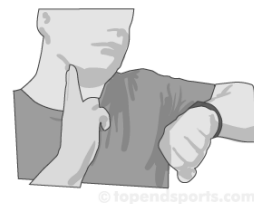
Knowing how hard to work during training is very useful and may also offer you peace of mind. To find your heart rate zones you need to know your maximum heart rate (HRmax). To estimate this:

HRmax = 220 – age, therefore your HRmax = 220 - \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ bpm (ACSM Guidelines, 1995)  
 Calculate Your Target Zones:

		(HRmax)					
ZONE 1 Light Intensity	e.g. walking	Lower Limit	0.50	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.60	x		=	
ZONE 2 Moderate Intensity	e.g. jogging	Lower Limit	0.60	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.70	x		=	
ZONE 3 Heavy Intensity	e.g. running	Lower Limit	0.70	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.85	x		=	
ZONE 4 Very Heavy Intensity	e.g. sprinting	Lower Limit	0.85	x		=	
		Upper Limit	0.95	x		=	

Most of your training should be done in Zone 2 and into Zone 3 (and even Zone 4 on tough climbs).

To take your heart rate using your pulse, press your index and middle finger into the groove alongside the outer edge of your windpipe. Once you have found the beat, count this for 20 seconds. Multiply your number by 3 and you have your heart rate in beats per minute. Alternatively you may wish to use a heart rate monitor. Compare this number to your training zones.



If you find your heart rate is consistently in Zone 4 when training, then slow down! You may also wish to consult your doctor for a health check.

### 4. The Plan

Everyone will have their own individual fitness levels and it is important to recognize these and be realistic with the targets you set yourselves. The most important thing is not how fit or unfit you think you are at the moment, but that come cycle challenge time, you are able to complete week 16 of our training plan. Once you can do this, you are ready to enjoy your cycling experience to the fullest.

Especially if you are new to exercise or you haven't trained for a while, remember it is important to build a base over a period of time, 'you can't fire a cannon out of a canoe!' This philosophy will help prevent injury too.

Week 1-2:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
45 mins cycle	45 mins activity	10-15 mile cycle	N/A
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3	ZONE 2	

Week 3-4:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour cycle	45 mins activity	20-25 mile cycle	N/A
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3	ZONE 2	

Week 5-6:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour15mins cycle	45 mins activity	30 mile cycle	N/A
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	

Week 7-8:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour30mins cycle	45 mins activity	40 mile cycle	30 mile cycle
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	ZONE 2

Week 9-10:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour30mins cycle	45 mins activity	50 mile cycle	N/A
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	

Week 11-12:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour30mins cycle	45 mins activity	60 mile cycle	50 mile cycle *
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	ZONE 2

Week 13-14:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour30mins cycle	45 mins activity	75 mile cycle	65 mile cycle *
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	ZONE 2

Week 15-16:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour30mins cycle	45 mins activity	90 mile cycle	65 mile cycle *
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	ZONE 2

Last week:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1 hour cycle	45 mins activity	1 hour cycle	N/A
ZONE 2 & 3	ZONE 3 & 4	ZONE 2	

\* Only do session 4 on weeks 12, 14, 16 and ensure you take your rest days.

Try to add the strength circuit into your training program - start with 1 circuit and add 1 each fortnight until you get to 5.

Be it this guide you use, or another one, stick to it! Things may crop up that alter your plans, other commitments, injuries, lack of motivation etc, but commit yourself to do everything you can to follow your plan. Set up a blog, tell your friends what you're doing, stick it to your fridge, pay yourself to train!

## **5. Get ready**

Be sure to start each cycle with a warm up, especially in the cooler training months. Start with a slow walk or jog for a few minutes. Then walk on tip toes for 10 steps before walking normally again. Repeat this 3 times. Now as you walk, flick your heels back towards your bum for 10 steps. Repeat this 3 times. Now as you walk (and ignoring any funny looks you may be getting!), bring your knees up towards your chest for 10 steps. Repeat this 3 times. By now the muscles of your legs should feel warmer and your heart rate should be increasing gradually. Try a few arm circles too, start small and getting bigger, go forwards and backwards.

After this, your body temperature should have risen, you may be a little more out of breath, and you are ready to begin your cycle. If you are more of a 'get on and ride' type person, try to start slowly and avoid hills for the first 10 minutes. Don't be afraid to get off and have a stretch.

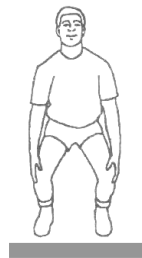
## **6. Find the strength**

Take a look at these exercises for your legs, back and abdominals (tummy). Try them out in a repetition range of between 12 and 15. Once you are happy with them individually, put them all together in a circuit, i.e. 12-15 reps per exercise, all 5 exercises in a row. Take 30 seconds rest between exercises if you need it. Start with one circuit and build up gradually.

- Calf raise: stand with your feet hip width apart. Gradually rise up onto your tiptoes. Hold for 2 seconds and then return your heels back to the floor. For a greater range of movement, stand on a step with your heels dropping down lower than your toes. You may need something to hold onto!  
**12-15 reps**
- Squats: stand with your feet hip width apart. Slowly sit down towards the floor until your knees get to 90°. Your body weight should be on your heels and you should be able to see your toes over your knees. Then stand up tall. Again, find something in front of you to hold onto if you need it.  
**12-15 reps**
- Lunges: take a  $\frac{3}{4}$  stride out in front of you. Bend both knees and sit down towards the floor. Your front knee should get to 90°. Push up tall through your front heel. Keep your feet in same position for all 12 repetitions before you switch legs.  
**12-15 reps**
- Back extension: lay on your front with your arms outstretched in front of you. Slowly raise your chest off the floor. As you do so bring your arms back towards your sides, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Slowly return to the start position.  
**12-15 reps**
- Abdominal crunch: lay on your back with your knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor and hip-width apart. Place your hands on your legs and slowly slide your fingertips up towards your knees. Slowly return back down to the start position. (The crunch may also be done with hands at side of the head – same applies, gradually raise chest and shoulders off the floor and back down again.)  
**12-15 reps**



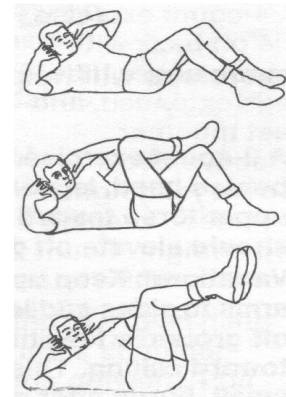
*Calf raise*



*Squats*



*Lunges*



*Abdominal crunch*



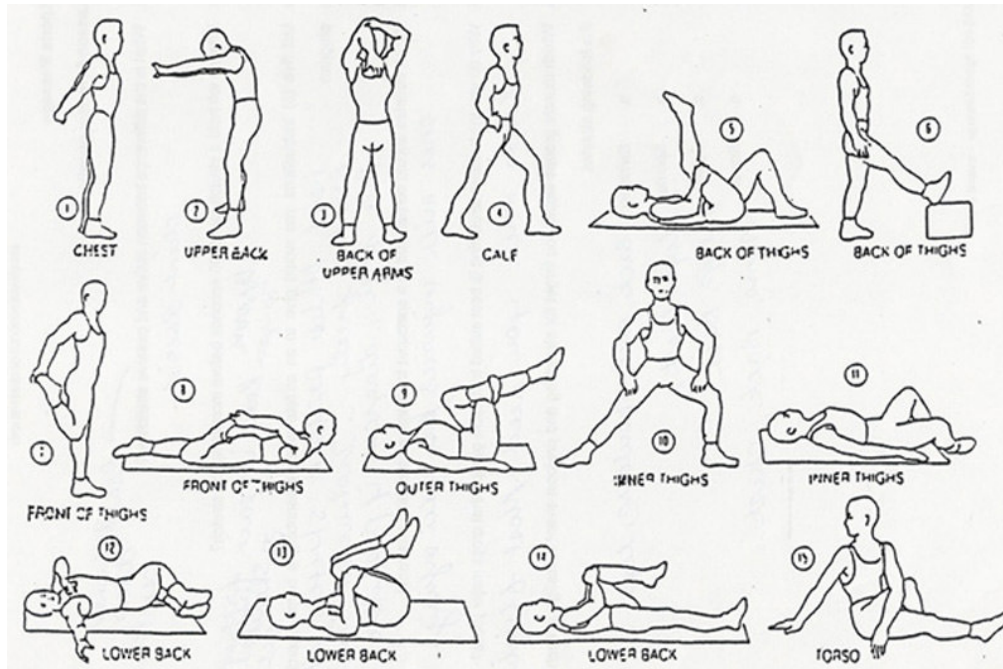
*Back extension*

If you have access to a gym, why not ask a fitness coach or personal trainer for help with these? They may even be able to show you some more exercises. Try a spinning class for cycle specific training – a great way to improve cycle fitness and burn calories at the same time.

## 7. Be flexible

With all the training you'll be doing, certain muscles are going to tighten up. Don't worry this is all part of the body adapting to change. To help with this stiffness try to get used to a post exercise cool down. The idea is to gradually reduce your heart rate to its resting state, and to stretch out the muscles you have been using.

Try these stretches after you finish training. Get to a point on each stretch where you can feel a pull and hold for 15 seconds, repeat as needed.



These stretches may also be used during your warm up phase before exercise. Remember you shouldn't stretch cold muscles, so take a walk or gentle cycle first.

## 8. Variation

Doing the same thing over and over can become very monotonous and demoralizing. Alter your routes, your distances, your speed, and your terrain. Not only will this help motivate, but the changing demands on your body will prepare you physically for what to expect from your challenge event.

Remember, you don't just have to cycle. Why not try another activity such as swimming, running, or joining a gym? See if you can encourage a friend to go along with you. Taking up a sport may also be an option but remember, when things become competitive, there is more chance of injury!

## **9. Food for thought**

The increased physical demands of training will place added nutritional requirements on your body.

Staying hydrated is vital to your body's ability to function, not least when exercising. Try to drink plenty of water before, during and after physical exertion. In large quantities, water can become bland so try fruit squash or energy drinks as an alternative. Remember, small sips often is the best way to stay hydrated.

On training days your body will also need more energy, especially if you are going to be cycling for up to 8 hours. Carbohydrates provide the body with energy and can be found in cereal, bread, potatoes, pasta and rice. You may also like to use energy drinks, bars and gels – these provide rapid energy and can be consumed on-the-go.

Your body will also gain energy and nutritional benefit from increasing your fruit and vegetable intake. Try to make your five a day and be varied in your choices (and colours). Bananas, oranges, and kiwi fruits are a good place to start. Try replacing sweets with snacks such as carrots or dried fruit.

Proteins provide some energy but are also vital in repairing tissue damage caused by exercise. We mainly get our proteins from meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans and lentils.

The general rule is anything in moderation.

## **10. Enjoy yourself**

This should be one of the reasons why you are taking part in the cycling event. Be sure to think remember all the reasons why you are doing it – this will help in both the tough times and the good ones! Feel free to smile or sing a song.

Get a friend to join you – cycling is sociable and it's easier to stay motivated if you have someone to chat to, joke with, and bounce off of. After all, there will be many people to get to know on the cycle itself.