

GETTING FIT FOR THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS





The West Highland Way and Great Glen Way are among the least strenuous treks we offer and a great introduction to multi-day hiking. The average stage length is about 17 km (10 miles), a notable exception being the final stage of the Great Glen Way at 30 km (19 miles). Elevation gain and loss varies throughout the hikes and there are several considerable climbs on both, but with a bit of training and conditioning you'll be more than ready to take them on. Below you will find 4 steps to help you get prepared for some of the most famous hikes in Europe.

Note: please consult your doctor regarding any high-intensity workout routine.





STEP 1: HIKE

The best training for a long-distance hike is hiking. The more often you can hike, the better. If you live in an area that is hilly or mountainous, make use of that terrain and start ascending and descending, rather than staying on flat ground. If you are training with day hikes, practice with a little more weight than you will carry on your trek. If you have opted for baggage transfers, you should keep your day pack under 10 pounds on the tour, and more than that while training. Try to use the same boots that you will be wearing during your trek. This will help break in the boots and alert you to any possible pain points. Finally, try to string together two or three consecutive days of hiking (a long weekend is perfect) of approximately 6 to 8 hours per hike. Your practice hikes will help build key stabilizing muscles in your legs, abdomen and back, as well as provide aerobic benefits. This will also help mentally prepare you for multiple days of long hikes with few breaks.



STEP 2: AEROBIC WORKOUTS AND STRENGTH TRAINING

If you do not have the time or environment for hiking, strength and aerobic training workouts are vitally important. For strength training, concentrate on building endurance in legs, core, back and shoulders. Aim for a higher repetition range per set using a lower amount of weight. Bodyweight exercises are also a good option: these include squats, lunges, push-ups, and crunches. Always focus on good form. If you are unfamiliar with these motions, consult an expert or high-quality resource.

Running, bicycling, and swimming are great ways to increase your aerobic capacity. Aerobic workouts can be short and intense, like sprints, but you should try to include longer workouts, as well. Vary your exercise routine to increase its effectiveness and to keep your motivation up: find a different location for a run, or try a different exercise in the gym. If you have access to a Stairmaster machine or something similar, use it! Simulate your backpack by wearing a weighted vest, carrying dumbbells, or even putting a heavy chain over your shoulders.



STEP 3: EAT RIGHT

Any training regimen should be based on a healthy, balanced diet. This is good advice in general, but here it counts double. The basis of a healthy diet is fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and whole grains, excluding starchy vegetables like potatoes (sadly). You will need the good carbohydrates that these foods provide while you train. Besides, vegetables, fruits and whole grains provide important micronutrients – like vitamins and minerals – that help your body recover and strengthen after exercise. Bananas are our favorite, as they provide vitamin B6 and electrolytes.

A sufficient amount of high quality protein is essential for muscle repair. Lean meats like poultry and fish are great, but vegetarian options like black beans and other legumes can also deliver enough protein to help your muscles re-knit themselves. If necessary, you can supplement with a good protein powder.

We recommend you calculate your daily calorie and macronutrient needs and then plan your diet accordingly. Consume as few highly processed foods as you can. However, you can treat yourself to some dark chocolate while hiking, which provides an energy boost while being both nutritious and delicious.



STEP 4: GET FLEXIBLE

Stretching is most beneficial as an injury-prevention measure. The last thing you want is to pull a quad on your second day and deal with pain throughout the trek, or worse, cancel your trip. Warming up before and stretching after each hike and workout is highly recommended. Develop a standard stretching routine as part of your training regimen and perform it every night of your trek. Consider adding yoga to your training regimen, as it not only increases your flexibility but also increases blood circulation and lung capacity, depending on the yoga variety.





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