

Training Guide

Escape to Africa cycling challenge

20-31 October 2012

This guide should contain all the information you need about training, nutrition and kit. Your local gym or cycle club may also be able to offer you some help, but if you need any further advice, or someone to listen to you talk about your aches and pains, please give Tris or Lauren a call on 020 7840 7875 or email biking@macmillan.org.uk

Contents

The right training programme for you

Fitting training into your busy life

Basic stretches and exercise circuit

Food & diet



supporting Team Macmillan

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The right training programme for you

All Macmillan cycling challenges are designed for people who lead an active lifestyle, and they are achievable as long as you are prepared to train. Cycling challenges are more enjoyable if you have prepared your body for the event so with the help of the CycleSurgery team, we have put together the following training plans to make sure you get the most out of Escape to Africa.

None cyclists/moderately fit

People who have not ridden a bike for several years or indeed at all will have to start their training regime at least 4 months in advance of their trip. Mileage should be built up gradually to avoid injury and over-exercise, and to establish a good base fitness on which to build the stamina levels you will need on a 12 day cycle ride.

Weeks 1-4

A cycle ride every other day should be attempted for the first 4 weeks and the mileage should be between 5 and 10 miles, there is no need to over stretch the ride by pushing a gear that is too difficult, or riding as fast as you can, this can come later.

From the start you should attempt to develop your cadence, which is the speed at which your legs rotate (RPM). This will improve your aerobic capacity, so your heart and lungs will grow stronger and be less stressed when cycling or exercising.

To develop your cadence you should select the gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling on whatever gradient. If you can keep a steady RPM of around 60-70 most of the time this would greatly aid the speed at which you become cycling fit, and will increase your strength and stamina which you can then build on. Before you know it you will find yourself being able to push harder gears while maintaining the same RPM.

Weeks 5-8

When you're comfortable with your cadence and riding position, it's time to start stepping up the mileage. For the next 4 weeks you

should attempt to ride 15 - 20 miles 3 times a week, with a Sunday ride every other weekend of about 25 miles.

Weeks 9-10

By now you should be feeling really confident and enjoying your cycling. In the next 2 weeks you should be maintaining the same schedule but now starting to ride 20-25 miles three times a week with an alternate Sunday ride of 30 miles.

Weeks 11-12

In the next 2 weeks you should add an extra day's cycling into your training, this day's mileage may only be around 10-15 miles but it will help you get a feel for cycling day after day. It would now be a good idea to step up the Sunday rides to three a month with a mileage of 40 miles.

Weeks 13-16

In the final three weeks your daily mileage should be around 30 miles on each outing and any Sunday rides should break 50 miles. A week before you leave for the trip you should wind down and perhaps attempt 3 short 10-15 mile rides.

Cyclists/moderately fit

This category includes anyone who has been cycling occasionally over the years, perhaps by cycling to work in the summer or regular Sunday rides with the family. As you will have a degree of basic fitness and confidence built up from previous cycling, around 3 months of training should prepare you for the ride.

Weeks 1-4

The first 4 weeks should be spent introducing a regular programme into your training and concentrating on your cadence (as above), which will help develop your strength for the sustained ride over 10 days. You should try 15 miles three times a week combined with alternate Sunday rides of 30 miles for the first month.

Weeks 5-8

In the second month you should be feeling stronger and confident enough to increase the mileage; your cadence should be fluent and comfortable, and the three rides a week should be covering about 25 miles each and the Sunday rides up to 40 miles.

Weeks 9-11

In the penultimate 3 weeks you should introduce a fourth training ride every week,

these four rides should be around 30 miles in length with three Sunday rides a month of 50 miles or more. You should by now be feeling comfortable with all these distances as long as you don't push yourself too hard.



Week 12

The final week should be spent winding down with three 10-15 mile rides and the confidence that you know you can complete and enjoy the 10 day ride ahead of you.

Cyclists/fit

This category includes people who cycle regularly throughout the year, whether commuting 20 miles or more to work a day or training seriously with weekend races and time trials.

People within this category should already have a good training schedule and be suitably fit to tackle the 8 day ride. If you commute, it's a good idea to step your weekly mileage up by cycling a longer route to work, or doing a brief morning or evening ride and by also doing regular weekend rides of around 50 miles or more.

Need more support?

This is a very basic training guide which won't suit everyone. If you're having problems with your training, get in touch on 020 7840 7875 or biking@macmillan.org.uk. If you've got an experienced fitness instructor, do take advantage of their advice.

Fitting training into your busy life

With all of your other commitments plus the fundraising you may feel like you have no time left to train! But it's really important and will really help you get the most out of your once in a lifetime challenge. Squeeze in that training by dragging yourself out of bed a little earlier, making it part of your commute, or using your lunch hours.

As well as the cycling, you can work on your overall fitness by walking down to the shops instead of taking the car or taking the steps up to the office, and you can always ask a local gym for their help with your training schedule.

Remember as you progress with your training it is really important to fit in some hills and take a couple of weekends where you can manage two consecutive long days cycling – this will let your body and your bum (!) know what you have really let yourself in for!



Team Macmillan and CycleSurgery's top training tips

- One hour of **quality** workout in the gym is worth two hours out on the road, but it won't prepare you to physically push a bike through the air.
- It is important to warm up before exercise and warm down afterwards correctly – this will help you avoid any niggling injuries.
- If your cycling regime is getting a little dull give yourself a bit of time off the bike and try swimming, rowing, cross-country skiing machines or spinning classes.
- Make sure you plan adequate rest/recovery days – these can be just as important as the exercise days so don't fret about putting your feet up on your rest days!
- Make sure you eat right before your cycle. Eat a good meal the night before with plenty of carbohydrates and make sure you keep hydrated on your ride – remember: little and often is best when you're hydrating.
- Keep your bike well maintained. CycleSurgery offer a bike service and employ qualified mechanics trained to the highest national level for cycle maintenance. For more information, visit www.cyclesurgery.com.

Basic stretch programme

Stretching muscles and stretching exercises will prevent injury and help prepare your body for the exercise to follow.

Allow time in your workout for stretching, both at the beginning and the end.

Calves: Stand approximately 1 metre away from wall. With one leg straight and heel on floor, lean forward and slowly push hips towards wall. You should feel a slow pull in your calf muscle. Hold for 10 seconds, swap legs, repeat 3 times. You should feel pull but no pain.

Hamstrings: Stand with your feet 1 metre apart. With your legs straight and hands behind your back, slowly bend forward at the hips keeping your back straight and head up. You should feel a slow pull in muscles at the back of your legs. Hold for 10 seconds, stand up and lean slightly backwards, repeat 3 times. You should feel pull but no pain.

Quads: Standing with your feet together, bring your left foot up and put your left hand on your lower shin by the ankle and pull behind your bottom. Keep your back straight and head up. You may need to balance with your right hand on wall. You should feel a slow pull down the front of your leg. Hold for 10 seconds, swap legs, then repeat 3 times. You should feel pull but no pain.

Groin: Stand with your feet 1 metre apart and both feet pointing forwards. Keeping your back straight and head up, slowly lunge down to the right side, you should be feeling a pull on inside of your left leg. Hold for 10 seconds, swap legs, repeat 3 times. You should feel pull but no pain.

Hips: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands on your hips.

Keeping your head still, rotate your hips round clockwise 10 times and anti clockwise 10 times. Repeat 3 times.

Torso: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands on your head. Keep your feet pointing forwards, but twist your body as far as is comfortable, hold for 1 second, face forward, twist your body in other direction, hold for 1 second, face forwards. Repeat 10 times.

Shoulder: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Start with your hands by your hips and keeping your arms straight, slowly swing your arms round backwards 10 times, then change direction swinging your arms forwards 10 times. Repeat 3 times.

Standing stretch: Stand with your feet together. Place your hands together and reach as high as you can, hold for 10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 3 times.

Please note; you should only stretch warmed up muscles. Don't stretch too far, all you should feel is a slow pull, never any pain. Never bounce, always stretch slowly. People with old injuries or bad backs should be especially careful whilst exercising and stretching.

Exercise circuit

These exercises are designed to strengthen specific muscle groups. It's important to just use your own body weight in the early weeks. In the latter weeks, small weights can be added to the ankles to help build strength. The idea of the circuit is to complete each exercise then move onto the next. Once all exercises are completed, (i.e. one circuit), you then go round the circuit again 3, 4, or 5 times as shown in the programme. You can also increase the number of repetitions for each exercise depending on how strong you're feeling. It is essential you stretch before and after the session to keep the muscles loose and long.

Calf raises: Stand with your feet together, arm length away from wall. Have your fingers just touching wall for balance. Raise yourself slowly onto tip toes and then slowly lower. Repeat 20 times.

Squats: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Put your hands on your hips. Keep your back straight and head up whilst you slowly lower yourself so knees are bent 90 degrees. Then stand up so your knees are locked straight. Repeat 20 times.

Step ups: Using the bottom step of a staircase or low bench, start with your left foot on the step and your right foot on floor. Stand up straight on your left leg, bringing your right foot up to next step above and then lower it back down to the floor. Repeat 20 times. Change leg and repeat.

Leg extensions: Sit on a high sofa/bed/bench with the backs of your knees just on the edge and your feet hanging down. Lean back with your hands behind you for support. Keeping the back of your knee on the seat, slowly lift your left foot up so your leg becomes straight and then lower it down again. Repeat 20 times. Change legs and repeat.

Leg raises: Lie front down on a mat or soft floor with your hands under your chin. Keeping your left leg straight slowly it raise six inches off the floor and then slowly lower. Repeat 20 times. Change legs and repeat.



Food and diet

What you eat when you start to train will impact on your cycling and energy levels. Initially while the training is at a low weekly mileage it would be best to concentrate on eating in a regular pattern and trying to reduce your daily intake of saturated fats. This includes less fried foods and dairy products as these will counter any training you start to do.

- **Carbohydrates** - as your mileage increases you should make sure that at least one meal a day is high in carbohydrates, as this will give you energy. Carbohydrates are mainly found in potatoes, bread, pasta and rice, so it's easy to base any meal around. You should combine this with a good mixture of vitamins and minerals from fruit and vegetables. Fruit in particular is an ideal food for cyclists because it is high in fructose. Fructose is a great source of energy as it's more easily absorbed from the stomach than other sugars (such as insulin from eating chocolate). Bananas are usually the preferred energy provider for cyclists especially when needing to maintain energy out on a ride.
- **Meat and fish** - provide some essential microproteins which help muscle development. If you plan to be really healthy it is best to eat fish and white meats such as chicken; if you are going to eat red meats you should cut as much fat off as possible and cook it in a healthy way such as grilling. If you are a vegetarian this is not a major point of concern: you may only find yourself looking for food stuffs that give you more energy.
- **Energy bars** - there are many different energy bars available on the market now, which are a concentrated source of energy providing elements to help you maintain your cycling should you start to wane. These do work but are much more expensive than bananas and other fruits.
- **Fluids** - you'll need to drink more fluids such as water, as you'll be losing more through sweating and exercising. You can also increase your energy levels by drinking isotonic drinks (such as Lucozade) or concentrated fruit juices. If you intend to drink these on the challenge it's a good idea to get your body used to them while training.



If you're careful with your diet by eating healthily and making sure you eat plenty of carbohydrates before and after long rides, you'll be fine. You might find yourself enjoying eating more as the guilt disappears because you know you have exercised!