

WE TRAIN HEROES



Mighty Hike training plan: Northumberland Coast

2021

In partnership with

running
withus 

COACHING &
CONSULTANCY
runningwithus.com

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

GETTING STARTED



10 Top Tips



1. Find the right shoes

Different shoes work for different people. Make sure you spend time trying on different styles and find something with good support and grip that suits you.



2. Train to time

Always thinking about how many miles you are covering can become stressful, which is why our training plans are mostly set to time. This means you can focus on building sustainably as the weeks go by.



3. Have a routine

Work, family and social life means that you might need to rework our training plans to make them fit around your lifestyle, and that's ok. Schedule in your training for the days and times you know will give you the best opportunity to focus on each session and get the most out of it.



4. Set targets

Starting at the beginning of a training plan can be daunting, so try and break it up into manageable chunks and remember to reward yourself for reaching personal milestones!



5. Don't just walk

Including cross-training such as cycling, running, swimming and gym work can quickly enhance your fitness, especially if you're struggling to fit in the much longer training walks.



6. Get strong

For this challenge you'll be on your feet for several hours, so building a strong core and having good posture will really help the miles feel easier and reduce the likelihood of injury.



7. Fuel and recover

You need to take care of your body when you're training to reduce the risk of injury and fatigue, so we have included sections with information on stretching, energy and nutrition to make sure you're in the best condition you can be.



8. Plan your route

Look online for popular hiking trails in your area or ask friends and family if they have any recommendations. However you do it, make sure you have a plan before you set off, so you can prepare for the distance you'll be covering and won't spend precious training time figuring out where to go.



9. Keep it social

One of the best things about walking is that it's an accessible and sociable activity. Invite family and friends along on your training walks to keep you company and to keep you motivated.



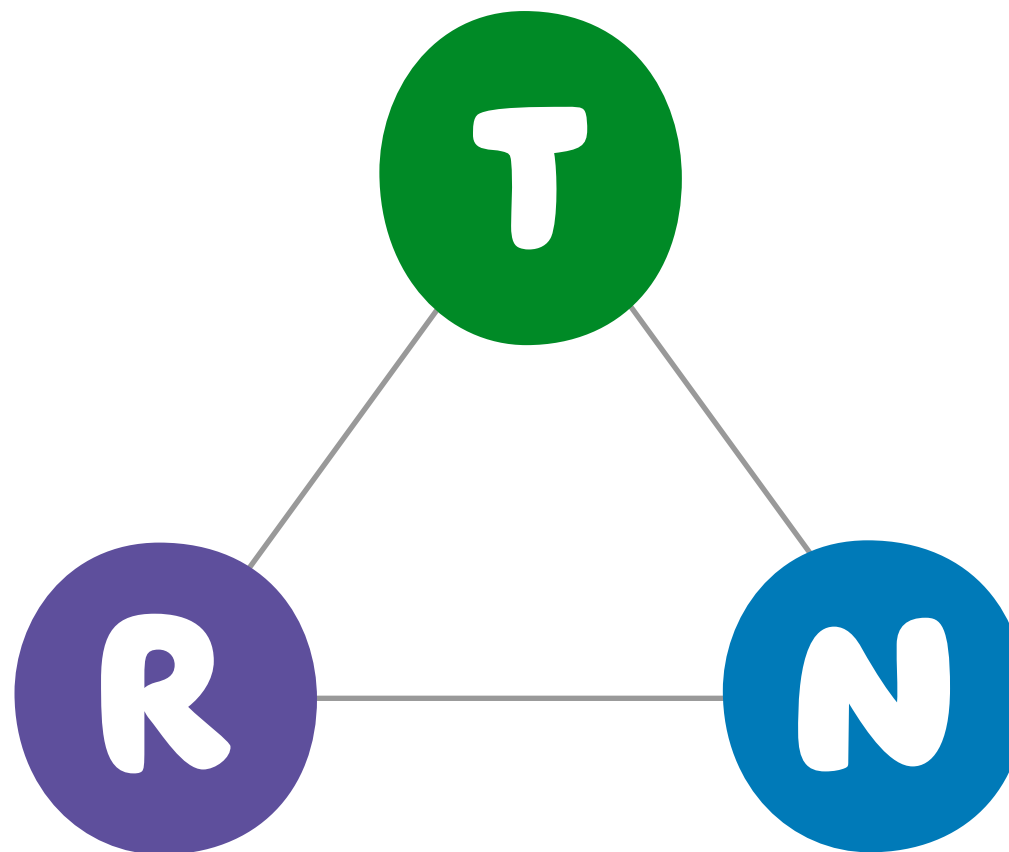
10. Any weather

The changeable British weather is part of the excitement and challenge of walking. Check out the kit section for our top tips on making sure you're prepared and comfortable in all conditions.

Training Triangle

Keeping it all in balance

The three key factors that go toward being in the best physical condition for your Mighty Hike are training, rest and nutrition. Most of us focus on the training but forget that we can't build fitness unless we sleep and eat properly too. As you train make sure you listen to your body and keep the triangle in balance. Read section 'Energy and Nutrition' later in this guide for more detail and tips.



Training

Your hikes, conditioning and cross-training is designed to progressively overload your muscles. When they recover from that overload they get stronger. Our training plans include a mix of different effort levels and distances to progressively build your endurance.

Rest

Your body improves and progresses during rest phases, rest days and as you sleep.

Nutrition

Fuel your training and recovery correctly by ensuring you have healthy carbohydrates, protein and the right micro and macro nutrients in your diet. This will give you the energy to train for longer and also allow your body to heal afterwards.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT KIT

Kick off your training by finding the right pair of shoes.

Why is this important?

Wearing the wrong shoes is the key cause of blisters, and 26 miles with blisters is not the experience we want you to have. Wearing the correct shoes will make sure your feet stay comfortable and will also play a huge role in preventing injury.

Spend time exploring the different brands and styles available – whether this be lightweight boots, walking trainers or trail trainers – and find a pair of shoes with good support and grip that suits you.

Going the distance

When you walk for more than a couple of hours your feet can swell from the heat, so it's important that they have room to 'spread'. Remember that new shoes need to be worn-in, which is the best motivation to get out and do some training.



What about socks?

Your socks are just as important as your shoes. Look for padded and breathable socks made with wicking material and make sure they go higher than the top of your boots.

Your feet have got to carry you a long way so show them some TLC. Take some fresh socks whenever you go out training and on the Mighty Hike, which you can change into when you have a break. Wear your thicker socks at the start and then as your feet start to spread, change into a thinner pair.

Walking poles

Using walking poles is completely optional. If you feel that you could use some extra support, particularly over uneven terrain or on steep ascents or descents, then go to your nearest outdoor shop to seek advice. If you experience joint or muscle pain then your doctor or physiotherapist may advise using them.

OTHER ESSENTIALS



First aid kit

This only needs to be small, carrying essentials like blister plasters, Vaseline, antihistamine tablets and painkillers, plus any other personal medication you need.



Waterproof jacket

You can't rely on the British weather so always be prepared. Look for a light, breathable and fully waterproof jacket with a hood which will let the sweat out and stop the rain getting in.



Layers

Wear several layers of wicking fabrics which will keep you warm in cold weather, and you can remove one by one as you heat up.



Sun cream

Even if it doesn't look that bright, three hours or more outside can increase your risk of skin damage.



Water

For your Mighty Hike we recommend bringing a bottle or camel pack that can hold two litres of water, and the same goes for your training hikes. Download the [Refill app](#) on your phone to find free places to fill your water whilst you're out and about!



Download full kit list

You can download a full kit list from our website: macmillan.org.uk/mightyhikeskitlist



Fully charged phone

In case of emergencies.

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THE TRAINING



Introduction

This training plan, put together by our coaching partners Running With Us is designed to get you to the start line of your Mighty Hike feeling prepared and confident to achieve your goal.

1

Is this the right plan for me?

This 15-week plan is suitable for those who are just starting out and those who already hike regularly and are looking to increase the miles. It involves a mix of activities and exercises to get you in the best physical condition for your challenge. If you ever feel like you're struggling in the early weeks, you can always swap the longer hikes with more cross training or repeat a week in the plan if you don't feel ready for the next step just yet.

2

Why train in this way?

If you keep doing the same thing over and over again you can't expect different results, so this plan is designed to give you variety and progression.

3

What if I miss a session, pick up a niggle or get sick?

No training guide is designed to be a tablet of stone. View your Mighty Hike training as a journey (which might not always go to plan!). Feel free to chop and change the plan and shift hike and exercise sessions to different days that may work better for you.

If you miss days through work, holiday, sickness or injury then don't play catch up. Step back into the plan where you left off and be patient.

4

Before and after

Always include a warm-up and cool-down session for each of the activities in the training plan, and stretch well using the exercises in this guide.

About the hike



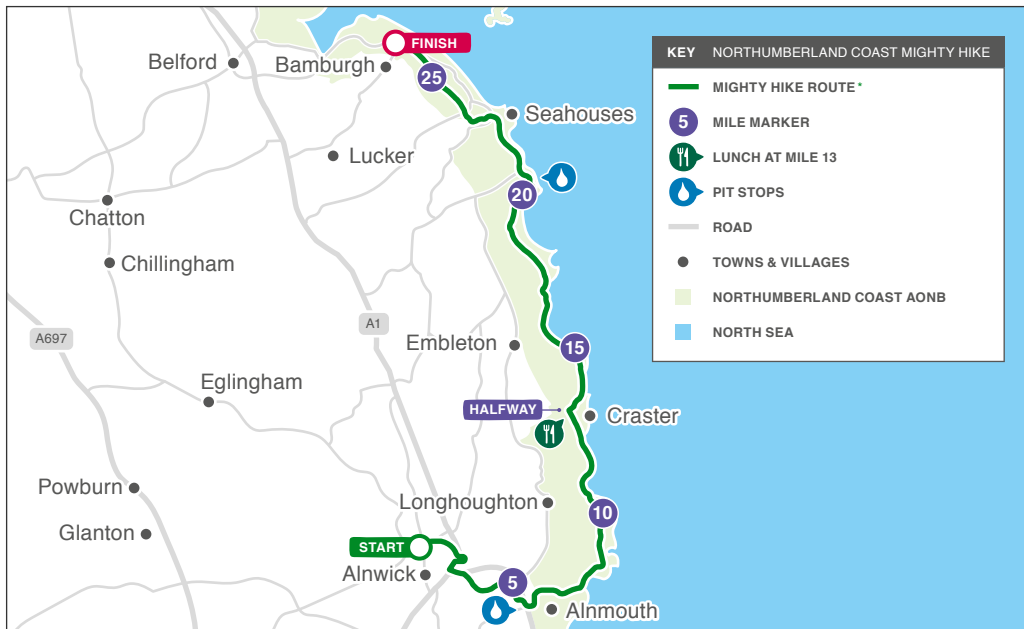
Northumberland Coast Mighty Hike

Distance:

26.5 miles

Approximate elevation gain:

966 feet



* The map route above is approximate. If any small changes are made due to health and safety reasons these will be communicated in the morning briefing.

The location

The Northumberland Coast is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and will see you hiking amongst some of the most stunning coastal scenery in Europe. Pristine beaches, beautiful villages and dramatic historical sights will help keep you going throughout the hike.

Getting prepared

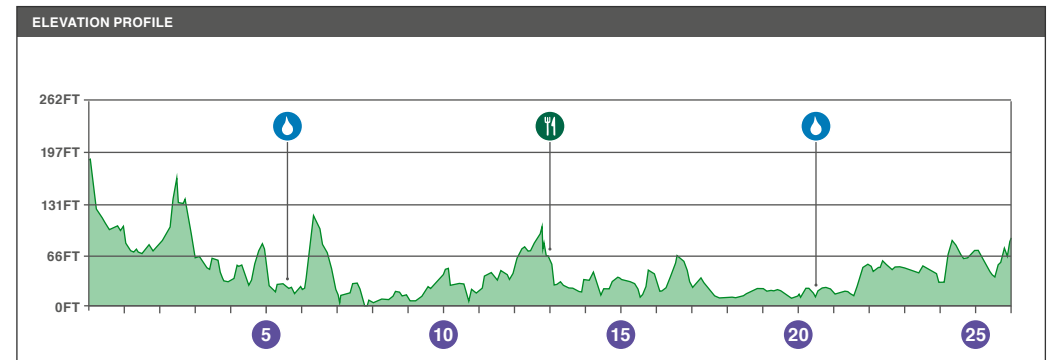
The Northumberland Coast Mighty Hike is a predominantly flat route, with well maintained paths and good underfoot conditions. Despite this 26 miles of hiking is still a demanding challenge particularly if the weather is poor.

The route

The route covers approximately 26 miles starting at Alnwick Castle and finishing at Bamburgh Castle. Full details of the start and finish points can be found on [our website](#).

How it works

The event is fully supported with a full buffet lunch stop at half way and regular refuelling stops along the route with drinks and snacks. Your bags will be transported to the finish line and there are toilet facilities at the start and all the pit-stops. This is a challenging event and whilst it is very achievable the distance and terrain should be respected and will require you to train!



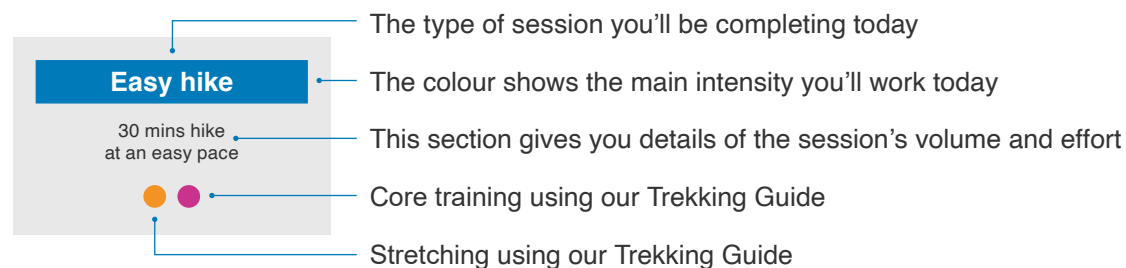
GLOSSARY

Here you will find a glossary of the terms used in our training plans.



Using the plans

Our training plans are structured as follows:



What the main intensities/colours mean:

Fartlek hikes

On these days we want you to include a mix of short and long faster efforts up and down hill as you feel during the hike using landmarks as targets.

Cross training

Swimming, running, elliptical training, rowing etc etc can be used to give you a great fitness boost.

Hilly hikes

These days include specific efforts up hill to build strength and endurance and get your prepared for the route.

Brisk hikes

On these days we ask you to include blocks of effort to raise your heart rate a little. Target an effort where you could speak only 5-6 words at a time

Easy / long hikes

These days include specific efforts up hill to build strength and endurance and get your prepared for the route.

















Rest

Rest is critical to adaptation and progression, you might be completing core or stretching on these days though!















Northumberland Coast training plan / 1

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekly positives:
1	<p>Rest</p> <p>Rest is vital to progression and adaptation. The yellow dot is a reminder to complete the stretches from our guide.</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Brisk hike</p> <p>40 mins walk to include 10 mins brisk effort.</p>	<p>Rest + core</p> <p>Where you see a pink dot consider undertaking the core exercises in our guide.</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Hilly hike</p> <p>10 mins steady walking + 4 x 5 mins brisk effort repeating up and down a 45-60 secs stretch of hill with 90 secs rest + 10 mins steady.</p>	<p>Rest</p>	<p>Cross training</p> <p>Optional cross training (swim, run, bike, cross trainer, rowing) – easy 30 mins.</p> <p>● ●</p>	<p>Long hike</p> <p>Easy walk 90-100 mins off road if possible.</p>	
2	<p>Rest</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Brisk hike</p> <p>40 mins walk to include 5 x 4 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy effort recovery.</p>	<p>Rest + core</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Hilly hike</p> <p>10 mins steady walking + 3 x 7 mins brisk effort repeating up and down a 60 secs stretch of hill with 90s rest + 10 mins steady</p>	<p>Rest</p>	<p>Cross training</p> <p>Optional cross training – easy 30 mins.</p> <p>● ●</p>	<p>Long hike</p> <p>Easy 1 hour 40 - 1 hour 50 mins off road if possible.</p>	
3	<p>Rest</p> <p>Stretching well the day after your long hikes will help you feel better as you move through the week ahead!</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Brisk hike</p> <p>45 mins walk to include 5 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90s easy recovery.</p>	<p>Rest + core</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Hilly hike</p> <p>10 mins steady walking + 3 x 8 mins brisk effort repeating up and down a 60 secs stretch of hill with 90 secs rest + 10 mins steady.</p>	<p>Rest</p> <p>Notice how you feel on your rest days, are there small changes you can make to improve your recovery?</p>	<p>Cross training</p> <p>Optional cross training – easy 30-40 mins.</p> <p>● ●</p>	<p>Long hike</p> <p>Easy 2 hours - 2 hours 15 mins off road if possible.</p>	
4	<p>Rest</p> <p>Remember to note down the positives at the end of each training week.</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Brisk hike</p> <p>45 mins walk to include 5 x 5 mins brisk effort, 60 secs easy effort recovery.</p>	<p>Rest + core</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Hilly hike</p> <p>10 mins steady walking + 3 x 10 mins brisk effort repeating up and down a 60 second stretch of hill with 90 secs rest + 10 mins steady walking</p>	<p>Rest</p>	<p>Cross training</p> <p>Optional cross training – easy 30-40 mins.</p> <p>● ●</p>	<p>Long hike</p> <p>Easy 2 hours 30 mins off road if possible.</p>	











Northumberland Coast training plan / 2

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekly positives:
5	Rest Get into a good habit of regular stretching check out our training guide! 	Easy hike 50-60 mins easy walk at a conversational effort.	Rest + core 	Brisk hike 40 mins walk to include 3 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery.	Rest	Cross training Optional cross training – easy 30-40 mins.  	Long hike Easy 1 hour 45 mins off road if possible.	
6	Rest 	Brisk hike 50-60 mins walk to include 6 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery.	Rest + core Check out the training guide for our top tips on getting better sleep and recovering well. 	Hilly hike 10 mins steady walking + 8 x 2-3 mins brisk up and down hill efforts with easy walk back recovery + 10 mins steady walking.	Rest	Cross training Optional cross training – easy 30-40 mins.  	Long hike Easy 2 hour 45 mins - 3 hours off road.	
7	Rest 	Brisk hike 50-60 mins walk to include 3 x 10 mins brisk effort, 120 secs easy recovery.	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 45-60 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Fartlek hike 30-45 mins hilly 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike Easy 3 hours 15 mins - 3 hours 30 mins easy and off road.	
8	Rest 	Brisk hike 50-70 mins walk to include 4 x 8 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery.	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 45-60 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Fartlek hike 40-50 mins hilly 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 3 hours 45 mins - 4 hours mins off road.	

Northumberland Coast training plan / 3

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekly positives:
9	Rest 	Brisk hike 40 mins 'out and back' walk – walk out for 20 minutes, turn and get back to the start 2-3 mins quicker over an undulating route.	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 45-60 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Fartlek hike 40-50 mins hilly 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 4 hours 30-45 mins walk with the final 75 mins to include 3 x 20 mins brisk effort with 3 mins easy between each.	
10	Rest This is a slightly lighter week to allow more adaptation to the training. 	Brisk hike 50 mins walk to include 4 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 40 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Easy walk 30-40 mins easy walk.	Long hike 2 hours 15 mins all easy.	
11	Rest Now we are in our peak training weeks work to make sure your nutrition and snacking between meals is spot on! 	Brisk hike 50 mins 'out and back' walk – walk out for 25 mins, turn and get back to the start 2-3 mins quicker.	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 45-60 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Fartlek hike 45-60 mins 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 23-26km off road walk.	
12	Rest Look back on all your positives to see how far you have come! 	Brisk hike 60 mins with the final 25 mins at a brisk effort over and undulating route.	Rest + core 	Cross training Cross training 45-60 mins at an easy effort.	Rest	Fartlek hike 60 mins hilly 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 27-30km off road walk aiming to include 2 x 5km at a brisk effort in the final 15km.	

Northumberland Coast training plan / 4

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekly positives:
13	Rest 	Brisk hike Progression walk of 30 mins easy, 30 mins brisk.	Rest + core 	Cross training 50-60 mins easy cross training.	Rest	Fartlek hike 60 mins 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 5 hour easy walk allowing breaks for food and rest every 90-105 mins.	
14	Rest In the final two weeks you will see your training cut back a little to ensure you are feeling recovered for event day! 	Brisk hike 45 mins walk to include 4 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery.	Rest + core 	Cross training 30-40 mins easy cross training.	Rest	Fartlek hike 40 mins 'fartlek' walk using landmarks.  	Long hike 90-100 mins easy relaxed walk.	
15	Rest Look back on all your positives to see how far you have come! 	Brisk hike 30-40 mins walk to include 3 x 5 mins brisk effort, 90 secs easy recovery.	Rest + core 	Easy walk 15-20 mins easy walk.	Rest	Mighty Hike! Northumberland Coast Mighty Hike – Good Luck!	Rest	

STRONG & INJURY FREE

STRETCHING TIPS

Here are some tips for the stretches in this section:

- ✔ Stretch both legs and repeat 2-3 times if certain muscle groups seem particularly tight.
- ✔ Hold stretch for 40-45 secs each time and complete them after all forms of exercise.
- ✔ Never stretch cold muscles.
- ✔ A good stretching routine will help to restore the muscle balance and allow you to be more flexible.
- ✔ Consider investing in an 'MOT' with a sport physiotherapist or some sports massage which can help manage the build up in tightness that will occur in your training.
- ✔ A 'foam roller' can be used to supplement your stretching on a day to day basis to massage sore muscles.



KEY STRETCHES

Glutes

Sit with one leg out straight. Cross the other leg over, keeping knee bent. To feel stretch in backside hug bent knee into chest. Keep back straight.



Hamstring (origin)

Lay on back. Pull one leg up to chest and hug with both arms. Keep one leg straight on floor keeping ankle flexed.



Hamstring (belly)

Lay on back. Keep one leg on the ground. Raise other leg holding the back of the calf. Bring up to feel the stretch in the middle of the hamstring.



Lower back

Lay on back. Bring one leg up to chest and rotate to lower knee to floor using opposite arm as a weight. Keep one leg straight and both shoulders on floor. Other arm should be straight out at shoulder level.



Quads

Grasp the top of the ankle with the same side hand and bring heel to backside. Hips should be pushed forward.



Hip flexors

Kneel on one with a 90 degree angle at both knees. Push hips down and forwards until a stretch is felt at the front of the hip.



Calf (gastrocnemius)

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Take one foot forward and keep feet parallel. Maintain the arch in the forward foot by pressing down with the toes to stop foot rolling in. Straighten back leg and feel stretch in top area of the calf



Calf (soleus)

Repeat position of the gastrocnemius stretch but this time bend back leg to take stretch into lower calf above Achilles.



CONDITIONING

Finger crusher

Get into a sit-up position. Find the natural arch in your back and place your hands under the arch. Engage your lower abs and pelvic floor and push your spine down onto your hands, trying to crush your fingers into the ground. Hold this for 45-60 secs per set.

The next level: Do small alternate leg lifts, while still keeping even pressure on your hands or extending in to 'bicycle' movement in and out with your legs.



Back extension

From a prone position with your toes on the ground and fingers on temples raise your chest off the ground by engaging your lower back muscles. After a few secs relaxed back to the ground and repeat for 45-60 seconds.

The next level: Extending your arms out in front of you with add a greater lever angle and make this exercise more challenging.



Plank

Lift your body up with your weight on your elbows and toes. Keep a straight line from the neck down through the legs to your ankles, engage all your core muscles by sucking your belly button up to the ceiling. Keep your chest over your elbows. Hold for 30-60 secs.

The next level: Add in small alternate leg lifts. If this is too hard to begin with, you can avoid lower back pain by doing this with your knees on the ground.



Side plank

Make a right angle with your supporting arm, your feet together and your stomach strong. Rise up, making sure you squeeze your glutes and push your pelvis through. Hold it for 30-60 seconds.

The next level: Lift your free arm into the air, keep your side really strong, and don't let your middle sag.



Bridge

From a sit up position raise your hips up so your body forms a straight line from shoulder to hips to knees. Hold this position for 45-60 secs by squeezing your glutes and your lower abdominal muscles.

The next level: From a 'bridge' position straighten one leg at a time aiming to not let your hips 'sag' as you do so.



Single leg squat

Stand on one leg, engage your glute on your standing leg, keep your hips facing forward and aligned with your knee and toe. Send your hips backwards whilst bending at the knee. You don't want your knee to roll inwards, so go down as far as you can without that happening before moving back to a tall standing position. Repeat 8-15 times.

The next level: You can use a Swiss ball or use a 'wobble board' under your foot.



CROSS TRAINING



What it's all about...

The strength exercises we have shown you in this guide are one form of cross training. The others are non-hiking cardiovascular training such as swimming, cycling and gym exercises. These exercise the heart and will keep you aerobically fit. Your heart doesn't know the difference between going for a walk or cross training, so it just works as hard as you ask it to. You can really boost your fitness with the additional cross training in your plan.



Keep it specific

Whilst cross training can add masses of value and variety to your weekly training, make sure you remember your goal – hiking 26 miles. At the end of your block of cross training you need to have the strength and fitness to hike. The minute your conditioning or cross training is getting so hard that it's leaving you too tired to complete your long hikes, then it's lost the benefit. It is there to support your hikes, not replace them.



Get checked out

If you're injured firstly consult a doctor or physiotherapist before embarking on your cross training. If they say you are able, still follow your training plan but use cross training instead. Don't lose that hard-earned fitness – if you can do it safely and pain free then maintain your fitness with cross training. If you can see a sports physio or injury expert they will also offer rehab exercises and training advice to go alongside.



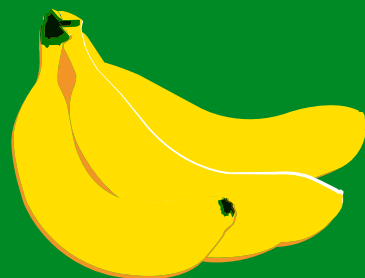
Gym classes

Many of you will be members (or could soon be members!) of a gym or attend local fitness classes. These are great for giving you a motivating environment to keep going with your training plan. Remember the key rules here too though – don't leave your classes too tired. Pilates and yoga are a great option to add into your training mix.



Heart rate

If you want to get serious with your cross training you may wish to invest in a heart rate monitor which will help you train in the correct effort zones and allow you to keep track of your developing fitness as you progress. Over time you should feel you're able to better control sudden increases in heart rate when you hike at a similar speed.



NUTRITION AND RECOVERY



Balance the triangle

Nutrition is one of key elements of our training triangle. Without getting the basics right you will struggle to have the energy to train well or the nutrients to heal and adapt to the training you have completed. It's a huge area with ever developing science and research so here we cover just the basic tips to keep you hiking strongly!



Protein rich, carbohydrate clever

Carbohydrate is critical to fuelling your training effectively. Take on high quality, 'slow release' complex carbohydrates including plenty of oatcakes, sweet potatoes and whole grains. Protein provides the essential nutrients you need to heal damaged muscle fibres and tissues from lean meats, fish, nuts, sprouting seeds and tofu.



Hydration

Aim to drink 2-3 litres of fluid a day, sipping regularly on water or even water with electrolyte tablets (e.g. High5 Zero). Avoid drinking caffeine with your main meals as this can limit some of your nutrient absorption, and late at night which will impact on your sleep. As your peak weeks of training kick in you may wish to monitor alcohol consumption which can have a big impact on your recovery.



Never hungry, never overfull

Split those big main meals into 5-6 smaller meals, with mid morning and mid-afternoon snacks to ensure blood sugar levels are balanced.



Micro-nutrients

Vitamins and minerals will deplete more quickly as you train harder so your demands will go up. Iron, vitamins D, B12, C, magnesium and calcium are just some of the basic ones to be aware of. Increase your nutrient density by eating as broad a range of foods as you can, plenty of variety in your fruit and vegetables is a great place to start!



Time it right

After your long hike make sure you refuel well within 60-mins of finishing. Take on plenty of fluids and have a balanced meal with plenty of protein and healthy carbohydrates.



Ignore the myths

There are a lot of myths and scare stories out there surrounding nutrition. No athlete should ever look to eliminate whole food groups unless recommended to do so by a qualified dietician, nutritionist or doctor. Avoid the advice of unqualified bloggers and if you want to explore your own nutrition in depth, seek a fully qualified professional.



Avoid the terrible toos

Building your training up too fast, too soon and doing too much training too hard is a sure fire way to pick up niggles and gradually lose the motivation to get up and train. Stick to the plan, be patient and don't panic or back fill training if you have started late or had some time off.



Monitor your health

As you increase your training your body and your energy demands will change. Your diet will need to change and adapt with this. Become good at monitoring your energy levels and notice any sustained increase in fatigue or tiredness over several days. Keep a training diary and note down those sessions that felt fantastic what you ate and drank so you can repeat this in the future!



Get to bed

Sleep is vital to adapting to training and getting fitter. Regularly getting 4, 5 or 6 hours sleep a night will limit your ability to achieve deep sleep, release growth hormones and will affect cortisol and stress levels. Get into a good pattern at night, avoid digital screens in the final hour before bed and limit caffeine and alcohol late at night.



Know when to back off

If you are regularly tired no matter how much sleep you are getting, feel your nutrition is good but still lack energy, are struggling to improve or even going backwards despite doing more and start to lose motivation to get out and train, you might be over training. Listen to your body and be prepared to back off and take an extra rest day and adapt your plan if needed. Consistency is vital!



Mighty Hike day

When you wake up you'll need to make sure you have a good breakfast to give yourself lots of energy. Then for the rest of the day we've got you covered, with regular pit-stops and a sit-down buffet lunch whilst you rest those feet. But you can always sneak your favourite snack or sweet treat into your bag for a little pick-me-up!

Contact

We're here for you

For support, information or if you just want to chat, call us free on 0300 100 0200 (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm) or visit [macmillan.org.uk/mightyhikes](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/mightyhikes)



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