

# TRAINING FOR A CYCLING CHALLENGE

## INTRODUCTION

People from all walks of life register for our cycle challenges, they are designed for people of average fitness and you don't have to be Sir Bradley Wiggins. **But you do have to be prepared to train!** The itineraries are designed to ensure you have an enjoyable challenge and your support team are there to assist throughout - they'll take the strain - leaving you free to enjoy the day's cycling. You're in the best

hands throughout the trip; our challenge leaders are all very experienced; they identify signs of tiredness, and are there to help.

Global Adventure Challenges offer some fantastic cycle challenges - real adventures - and whichever challenge you have chosen it will be more enjoyable if you're well prepared. You don't want to find yourself lagging behind the main group and feeling exhausted at the end of each day's route, or having to get off your bike and walk every time the road starts going uphill. We want you to have a fantastic experience and the best preparation you can do? **Get Cycle-Fit.**

Getting cycle-fit will increase your enjoyment whilst you're on your challenge and help prevent injury. Plus, training for your challenge is a great way to improve your overall health and wellbeing.

- A 1 - 2hr bike ride every weekend is not enough to prepare you for a daily routine of 6 - 8hrs in the saddle.
- Your training should start several months before the challenge, and the following notes will help you to get cycle-fit.
- Before starting any training programme you should consult your Doctor.
- Remember - without training, you may not be able to complete this challenge.



“BELIEVE YOU CAN”

# TRAINING FOR A CYCLING CHALLENGE



## WHAT TYPE OF CYCLIST ARE YOU?

Training for a cycle challenge depends largely on your present fitness; age and the amount of cycling you have done in the past. There are a number of ways to train and the notes below should be adapted to fit into your personal lifestyle. Training should be enjoyable, ride with friends, other challenge participants, or try joining a local cycling club, British Cycling (Check BC's 'Ride Social' events) or your local Cyclist Touring Club (CTC) and make some new friends.

Understanding where you're at with your fitness right now is the best place to start. It'll help you plan to get from where you are to where you're going.....

### Are you a beginner?

Participants who have not ridden a bike for several years, or perhaps never, will have to start training at least 4 months before their challenge. The mileage should be built up gradually to avoid over-exercise and injury. This is also to establish a good base fitness level on which you will need to build stamina for your cycle challenge.

**Your aim:** is to move onto the intermediate plan. This can be done once you feel comfortable with the beginner's plan which you might complete 1, 2 or 3 times depending on your ability.

### Are you an intermediate?

Includes participants who have been cycling regularly over the years:

- Perhaps commuting a short distance to work.
- Go on regular weekend rides (20 miles+) with friends and family.

As you have a degree of basic fitness and confidence, 3 months or so of training should prepare you for your challenge.

**Your aim:** is to introduce a regular programme into your training, and some thought should be spent in trying to improve your cadence (more of this later) if you have not considered this aspect before. Leading up to the trip complete consecutive days of 6 - 7hrs cycling over a couple of weekends.

### Are you advanced?

This category includes participants who cycle regularly throughout the year - whether it be commuting 10 - 20 miles or more to work each day, going out on your bike (2hrs+) 3 - 4 times a week, or training seriously with weekend races, time trials or sportives. People in this category should already have a good training schedule and should amply cope with the challenge, therefore no schedule is provided.

However - Your aim is to be able to complete consecutive days cycling of 6 - 7hrs. Practice this before the challenge by doing 6 - 7hr days back to back - go away for a couple of weekends leading up to the trip and ride on both days. Enjoy yourself!



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## WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

The objectives to prepare for a cycling challenge are:

- Increase the capacity and efficiency of your body's cardiovascular system.
- Improve the endurance of your muscles. Building up their repetitive movement **strength**, thus allowing you to cycle further before feeling physically tired.
- Accustom your body to sitting on a saddle for 6hrs a day.

It's simple - about half of the endurance required for cycling 6 - 7hrs a day comes from the improved ability of your body to pump blood and oxygen to your muscles.

The other half comes from increased efficiency (strength) of the muscles to extract oxygen and convert it.

*And don't forget we have to be able to sit in the saddle for 6 - 7hrs each day.*



## DO'S AND DON'T'S

- **Ride Safe! (Hi Viz, helmet, head up, single file, respect other road users).**
- The **best cardio exercise** to prepare for a cycle challenge **is cycling**, because it uses all the same movements and muscles that you'll be using on your challenge. You'll strengthen all the right muscles, get used to the kit you will be using and get used to sitting in the saddle.
- Don't do too much too soon (don't go and do 100 miles on your first ride!) and get too fatigued or even worse injured, and not be able to ride your bike for the next month!
- Always warm up (prior to) and warm down (after) exercise and include stretching.
- **It works.**
- As you get fitter keep the time that you spend training the same but increase the intensity (work harder) - you can fit it in to your busy lifestyle.
- Keep a note of the distances you cover using a cycle computer - you will be able to monitor your improvement.
- Listen to your body and if you are tired do a little less, if you feel strong do a little more - the suggested plans aren't prescriptive.
- Do wear padded cycling shorts.
- Do get advice from the attendant/instructor at your gym on use of equipment and exercises.

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## FITTING YOUR TRAINING INTO YOUR LIFE

The programmes included in this document are rough training guides. Obviously with family, work and fundraising commitments you may not feel able to achieve what we have suggested for you. However, in order to get close to achieving your training it is vital you organise your time properly. There are many ways to ensure your time is maximised even if you feel that you have no time outside of work:-

- Organise your week to make sure you get out and do something!
- Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day's training; just get on with the next day. But try not to miss 2 days in a row.
- If you can't get out, try borrowing/buying a turbo trainer, but do try and cycle as much as possible in 'real' conditions. The more you train in similar conditions to your challenge (terrain and weather) the better.
- Try and get up an hour earlier and take a quick cycle before work.
- If you can cycle to work, **do so**. If you can't cycle the whole distance, why not cycle part of the distance and leave your bike at a bus/train station and take public transport for the rest of the journey. You must obviously be happy with leaving your bike in a safe and secure place.
- Do the school run on your bikes and get the kids fit too.
- Get your family/friends in on the action and training with you at the weekend or in the evenings.
- Use your lunch hour to take a brisk walk or cycle around the immediate area.
- Go to your local gym or 'spin' class and substitute this for one of your midweek sessions.
- It is important at weekends to get in some 'hilly' miles to experience cycling on different surfaces and gradients.
- You should try and make the time to cycle on some consecutive long days.

Although your challenge may be done on road or mountain bikes, this plan is based on time - so MTB or road bikes can be used.

***Nothing will prepare you for your challenge better than actually getting on a bike and cycling!***

## SO WHAT IS CADENCE?

From the beginning, you should develop your cadence, (this is the speed at which your legs rotate - **Revolutions Per Minute**), as this will improve your cycling efficiency and aerobic capacity, meaning your heart and lungs grow stronger and thus are less stressed when exercising. We count the RPM of **one** leg.

In order to develop your cadence, change gears so that your legs maintain the same RPM on whatever gradient you are riding. You should select a gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling. Try to keep a steady RPM of about 70 – 80 (for beginners) and 80 - 90 (for intermediate/advanced) as this will greatly aid the speed at which you become **Cycle-Fit**, and will increase your stamina. You will soon notice yourself being able to push harder gears while maintaining the same RPM.

**Is Cadence Important? - YES!**



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## CHALLENGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

Undoubtedly the best form of training for a cycle challenge is to ride your bike and then ride your bike some more. But there are a few things that you can do to improve your skills for the specific challenge you are going to do.....

If you are going on one of our road bike challenges - London to Paris, Euro City Cycle, Death Valley, Paris to Geneva, Milan to Monaco, Yosemite to San Francisco, we would advise you to do your training on a road bike and predominantly on roads.

However, if your challenge is going to use both tarmac and dirt roads - Vietnam to Cambodia, Costa Rica Coast to Coast, Kilimanjaro to Ngorongoro Crater Cycle, India Cycle Challenge, you can do some riding to better prepare yourself.

- Although your challenge is done on mountain bikes (MTB), this plan is based on time in the saddle - so mountain bikes or road bikes can be used for your training - but you should try and incorporate some training on a MTB to get used to the slightly different riding position.
- Visit your local MTB trail centre and do some riding there. You don't have to do the real technical stuff. Completing the blue routes will be more than adequate for the type of terrain you will experience, and its great fun.
- If you haven't got a trail centre close by, try riding along local canal towpaths. Particularly if you are going on a Vietnam to Cambodia cycle challenge (although our canal towpaths are much narrower than the ones you will encounter).
- But don't forget your target of 6 – 7hrs in the saddle on consecutive days.

## THE TRAINING SCHEDULE

The schedule is broken down into 4 week blocks as it is easier to maintain focus and motivation. **Set yourself a specific target or goal at the end of each 4 week block.** This can be: participating in an organised event, a group ride with your fellow challenger participants, your first 50 mile ride, or your first ride with the local cycling club/CTC. You set your own target and make it enjoyable.

**Little and often is the key, and although you ride your bike nearly every day (you will be riding every day on your challenge so you need to train for this) the following training plans can be fitted into a normal working week, with a little adjustment and a certain amount of commitment.**



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- Beginner:**
- Try to cycle at least three times per week, building up the distance you cycle each week.
  - Cycle on varied terrains including some hills at the weekend.
  - Do longer rides at the weekend.
  - Start out with a distance or time you're comfortable with. This might range from 30mins for someone who hasn't exercised for a while, to an hour or more for someone who has cycled before.
  - Record the distance that you cover in your initial rides. From there you can design a programme where you increase your distance a bit each week to get to your goal (**to move on to the Intermediate plan**). Move on as soon as you are ready.
  - Variety can be added by including a gym/spin class, riding to work and changing your route.
  - You can train at home if you have access to a home cycle trainer (turbo trainer).

Your weekly training plan might start off looking similar to the table below. But we recommend completing the longer rides at the weekend.

<b>BEGINNER:</b>							
	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Day 7</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Rest Day	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>(family / friends ride)</b>	1½hrs on hilly ground (8 - 12 miles)
<b>Week 2</b>	Rest Day	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>(family / friends ride)</b>	1½hrs on hilly ground (8 - 12 miles)
<b>Week 3</b>	Rest Day	1hr on the flat (10 - 12 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1hr on the flat (10 - 12 miles) <b>(family / friends ride)</b>	1½hrs on hilly ground (10 - 15 miles)
<b>Week 4</b>	Rest Day	1hr on the flat (10 - 12 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	Rest Day	<b><u>Your Target Ride.</u></b>



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## Intermediate

- Try to cycle at least three times per week, building up the distance you cycle each week.
- Cycle on varied terrains including some hills at the weekend.
- Do longer rides at the weekend.
- Start out with a distance or time you're comfortable with and increase the distance as you progress.
- Record the distance that you cover in your initial rides. From there you can design a programme where you increase your distance a bit each week to get to your goal (**6 – 7hr consecutive rides**) in the weeks preceding your challenge.
- Variety can be added by including a gym/spin class, riding to work and changing your route.
- You can train at home if you have access to a home cycle trainer (turbo trainer).

Your weekly training plan might start off looking similar to the table below. But we recommend completing the longer rides at the weekend.

<b>INTERMEDIATE:</b>							
	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Day 7</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Rest Day	1hr (inc 10mins pushing hard) (10 – 15 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1½hrs, (inc 20mins pushing hard) (15 - 22 miles) <b>(family / friends ride?)</b>	2hrs on hilly ground, (inc 30mins pushing hard) (20 - 30 miles)
<b>Week 2</b>	Rest Day	1hr (inc 10mins pushing hard) (10 – 15 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8 - 12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1½hrs, (inc 20mins pushing hard) (15 - 22 miles) <b>(family / friends ride?)</b>	2½hrs on hilly ground, (inc 20mins pushing hard) (25 – 37 miles)
<b>Week 3</b>	Rest Day	1hr (inc 20mins pushing hard) (10 – 15 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8-12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	1½hrs, (inc 20mins pushing hard) (15 - 22 miles) <b>(family / friends ride?)</b>	3hrs on hilly ground, (inc 20mins pushing hard) (30 – 45 miles)
<b>Week 4</b>	Rest Day	1hour (inc 20mins pushing hard) (10 – 15 miles)	1hr gym or spin class	45mins / 1hr on the flat (8-12 miles) <b>Cycle to work?</b>	Rest Day	Rest Day	<b><u>Your Target Ride.</u></b>



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TRAINING LOG					
Date	Distance	Terrain	Time	Rest taken	Average speed

