

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING FOR A TIMBERLINE HIKE

A Timberline hiking program in every respect is a "hike" that should be clearly distinguished from a "walk". Our daily itineraries that range from 6 to 14 miles, the magnificent alpine world that we'll explore at every opportunity and the climbs and descents that are an integral feature of these adventures, extend well beyond the parameters of a "walk".

Equally important, however, our hiking program is totally non-technical in nature and well within the physical comfort level of anyone who is reasonably conditioned leading an active lifestyle. Our pace is always leisurely -- a photo opportunity awaits around every bend in the trail. Every hike is set in a region of unique and extraordinary natural beauty. To hurry through the day would be an opportunity tragically squandered.

Make no mistake, though, the physical component of our program is present because we believe that it adds enormous substance to the experience. In so many ways, your physical involvement with your surroundings will enhance your appreciation and strengthen your connection with the land upon which you tread.

The underlying purpose for conditioning prior to tour is to obliterate any sense of intimidation or anxiety that you might otherwise feel as you contemplate the adventure ahead. Comfortably prepared, you are free to concentrate your energy where it belongs -- on the enjoyment of the beauty that surrounds you.

Since the intent of these comments is to discuss the physical component of our program and offer suggestions concerning preparation, rest assured that we are not about to urge that you launch into a crash regimen of endurance training. Hopefully you already are involved in a regular routine of meaningful physical activity and that you will continue that involvement as our program approaches.

A wide range of activities are helpful in preparing for a hike. What better way to prepare for a hike than to hike whenever the opportunity arises. Walking at a relatively brisk pace three times a week, progressively but gradually increasing your distances up to five miles is excellent conditioning. If you are a runner at regular intervals, stay with it. And for the "gym rats" in the group, you have a bonanza of useful toys at your disposal. Regular sorties on a stationary bike (upright or recumbant), stair-climber, nordic track treadmill, and even a rowing machine all will work.

Another issue that needs some discussion is the "altitude factor". Let's face it -- for those of you who live at or close to sea level, there's just no way that you can simulate that which you likely will experience on your first ascent beyond timberline in Colorado's high country. The altitude factor is most significant in Colorado, but to a lesser extent in northern New Mexico and Yellowstone, and to a far lesser extent throughout the remainder of our program. Though we'll exceed 12,000 feet in Colorado, maximum elevations in Glacier, Canada, Alaska and the Cascades rarely exceed 6,000 feet.

Though you won't be able to simulate altitude, the manner in which you manage your body can substantially lessen the impact of altitude. When you arrive at the assembly location, be committed to drinking lots of water throughout your stay, get lots of rest at night and, forgive us, avoid the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Most importantly, we'll introduce you to altitude moderately at first. We think that you'll be pleasantly surprised at your growing level of comfort as the program progresses.

All of the foregoing comments and suggestions are intended to provide some realistic insights into the adventure that awaits. The challenge is there and it is so by design, because it will enhance the adventure as you experience it and enrich the memories that will be with you always long after the adventure ends.

So much of the excitement of an adventure is in its anticipation and the preparation that you undertake in that anticipation. Be committed to having fun with that preparation -- no need to be intense about it. Know that we will never lose sight that this program is a vacation.

As always, don't hesitate to contact us with any questions that come to mind. We'll see you soon and look forward to sharing a great experience with you.