



## Walker Tips & Tricks

### How To Prepare For A Great Park Trek Walking Holiday

Updated July 2025

#### Purpose of This Note

This guide is intended to help walkers prepare for an upcoming adventure with Park Trek. Good preparation ensures maximum enjoyment. And your enjoyment and safety is our priority. This guide includes advice on footwear, equipment, and suggested fitness training ahead of your walk.

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#### **Acknowledgement to Traditional Owners**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country and recognize their continuing connection to land, water, skies and culture. We are privileged to live on the world's oldest continent with the oldest continuous living culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

# 1. Fitting a Pack

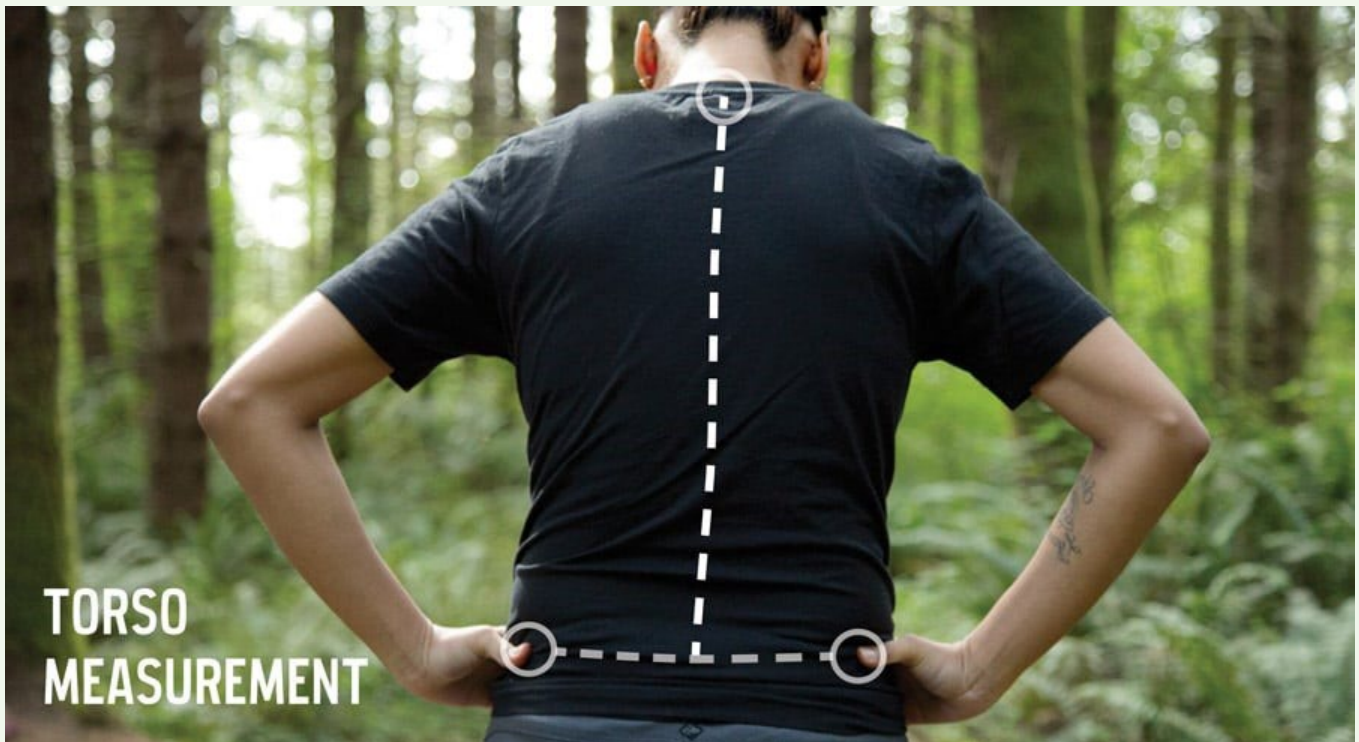
## Size

*“The best backpack for you is the one best suited to your particular body shape.”*

It is essential to get the right size pack for your body. Your torso length, not your height, is the most critical key measurement. To calculate your torso length:

- Tilt your head forward and locate the bony lump at the base of your neck. This is your C7 vertebrae and is the top of your torso length.
- Next locate your hip bones on each side of the body known as the iliac crest. With your index fingers facing forward and thumbs resting on your back, draw an imaginary line between the two thumbs. Where your thumbs meet is the bottom of your torso measurement.
- Stand upright and measure the distance between your C7 vertebrae and the spot where your thumbs met on your lumbar (use a flexible measuring tape). This is your torso length.
- Use your torso length to find your most suitable pack size. (Most packs include the function to adjust the sizing from extra small to large and will also state the capacity of the pack in liters).

*Tip – some brands make women-specific packs. Often women have smaller frames, so the torso dimensions are generally shorter and narrower.*





# 1. Fitting a Pack (cont.)

## Hip measurement

*“Most of the weight in your pack is carried on the hips, not on the shoulders”*

A proper fitting hip belt is critical.

- The first step is to measure your hips. To do this wrap a tape measure around the top of your hips, hugging the iliac crest (your hip bone). This line is slightly higher than your waist belt line.
- Once you have found the correct torso length pack for you, adjust the suspension if your pack has this feature.



# 1. Fitting a Pack (cont.)

## Further adjustment of the pack before you begin your walk

Your leg muscles are the largest and strongest muscles in the body, so adjust the pack so that the majority of the weight is resting on your hips.

Most good packs will have four primary adjustment straps, as follows:

1. Hip belt;
2. Shoulder straps;
3. Load lifter straps; and
4. Sternum (chest) straps.

It's a good idea to loosen of all straps on the pack prior to making any adjustments. Check the fit in a mirror after each adjustment.

The two straps that take priority are the shoulder straps and the hip belt. Then the chest strap and finally the load lifters, located above the shoulder straps.



**Step 1** – Place the pack on your back.

Move the pack around until the padding on the hip belt sits comfortably on the hip bone. You may need to tighten (or loosen) the shoulder straps until the pack is in the correct position on the hips. Now fasten the buckle so it's firm but not pinching the skin. The padding on the hip belt should extend slightly past the point of your hipbone.

**Step 2** – Locate the shoulder straps and pull down to tighten them.

The shoulder straps should fit snugly over your shoulders without bearing the weight of the pack. You want to avoid loading the shoulders and causing stress and/or pain.

Vary the tension on the straps until it feels comfortable. If needed, this process can be done to relieve any pressure during the hike.

**Step 3** – Locate the load lifter straps at the top of the pack (above the shoulder straps). When tension is applied to these straps they should be angled at about 45 degrees. Adjust until they feel comfortable, but not tight.

If there is an excessive gap between the shoulder straps and your shoulder, loosen the straps and tighten again. There should only be a minimal gap here.

**Step 4** – Sternum (chest) strap

Buckle up the strap and slide it up or down until it sits just below your collarbones. Again, aim for a comfortable fit. Over tightening the strap may lead to constriction of the chest and even difficulty breathing.

# 1. Fitting a Pack (cont.)

Now you should be ready to walk comfortably on the trail.

Make minor adjustments along the way to alleviate any pressure points or sore spots!

It will be trial and error the first few times. It's always a good idea to take the pack off if you have a break, this gives your back a rest.

Take into consideration your body position while walking; you should be in a slightly bent over position, which will balance the load on your body.

We have teamed up with One Planet who have an extensive range of quality hiking gear to purchase or rent, some of which is proudly made by them right here in Australia. Check out One Planet's website here: [www.oneplanet.au](http://www.oneplanet.au) .

Other quality outdoor stores (online and offline) that we recommend for hiking gear and advice include:

- Paddy Pallin at [www.paddypallin.com.au](http://www.paddypallin.com.au)
- Bogong at [www.bogong.com.au](http://www.bogong.com.au)
- Backpacking Light at [www.backpackinglight.com.au](http://www.backpackinglight.com.au)
- MacPac at [www.macpac.com.au](http://www.macpac.com.au)





## 2. Boots or Shoes?

### What is the Best Footwear for Walking and Hiking?

Hiking footwear is perhaps the most important consideration for every walker. The comfort of your feet will play a big part in your enjoyment of a walk.

Blisters, hot spots, damp socks, sore soles and twisted ankles are all problems related to your footwear.

Aiming to answer the eternal hiking question 'are hiking shoes or hiking boots better?' we spoke to the experts at one of Melbourne's leading outdoor gear retailers, [Bogong Equipment](#).

In a nutshell, Lockie from Bogong says it's most important to consider two key things:

- what foot shape you have, and
- what sort of walking you intend to do with your footwear.



## 2. Boots or Shoes (cont.)?

### **Your foot shape is important – so get your foot properly measured**

The shape of your foot will play an important role in the walking footwear that you choose.

“It doesn’t matter if the shoe or boot perfectly suits the intended use – the most important thing is that it best fits your foot. Suitability to foot shape, is always the most important,” says Lockie.

“You need hiking footwear to be fitted properly. Shoe sizing is a mine field, and it varies between brands and models. Staff must establish how wide your foot is and where the flex point is on your foot.”

The best thing to do is head to a shop with a range of brands – they will most likely have something that suits both your foot shape and your intended use.

### **What type of walking will you do?**

“When we are profiling a customer for hiking footwear, we divide them into three main categories.

The first category is customers that are day walking only – shortish walks, light packs, and single day usage.

The middle category is customers with mixed use, a mix of day walking and also sometimes carrying overnight hiking packs - and that is a key point of difference. If you’re carrying a heavy pack, as a general principle, it necessitates more structured, more supportive footwear.

The third category is the customer who is most commonly going to be carrying a heavy backpack in rough terrain.”

“We try to ascertain what the most ‘hard core’ use of the footwear is going to be, and we encourage people to purchase for that need,” says Lockie.

### **How much ankle support and structure do you need?**

“My personal theory is that if you’re buying footwear for hiking, you should have something that supports the ankle. There’s no harm in having ankle support,” says Lockie.

But ankle support doesn’t necessarily mean ‘boots’. It can mean a middle-range item of footwear known as a ‘mid’ or a ‘mid-cut’.

“In many cases we have a similar product in a shoe or in a boot,” says Lockie. “Something that is made as a shoe and then comes as an ankle support version is often called a ‘mid’ – as opposed to a boot. A boot is something that has a bit more structure under the foot.”



## 2. Boots or Shoes (cont.)?

### **What's the best footwear for the average Park Trek walker?**

We asked Lockie for his recommendation for an average Park Trek client, considering that most of Park Trek's tours involve carrying a day pack over several days of walking – sometimes shorter walks on well-maintained trails and sometimes long days on rugged trails.

“The most ideal product for them would be a ‘mid’ – a lightweight shoe with some ankle support”, says Lockie.

“There's no harm in ankle support. If people don't like that feeling around their ankle, you can fiddle with the lacing system to give yourself freedom but still have support.”

“A lot of people say, ‘I've never had a problem with my ankles’. But when you've walked twenty kilometres and you hit a loose stone at an odd angle and your legs are tired, it's a very different situation to just walking down the street. Having that ankle support there is a good thing.”

### **Do you need to wear your new hiking shoes in?**

“With the moulded plastic innersoles that they make these days, they can very precisely work out where to make a boot softer and where to make a boot stiffer - generally through the flex zone up to the ball of the foot they can soften it up. So, most of the lighter-weight mids can be walked straight out of the box,” says Lockie.

However, hitting the trail with brand new shoes is never a great idea. It's worth wearing the shoes on training walks to get used to the feeling of more supportive footwear.

“It's more a case of the customer needing to get used to the footwear than the footwear needing to be worn in,” says Lockie.

Full-grain leather boot models suitable for people doing rugged multi-day walks are generally stiffer and will still need a good wearing-in period.

### **Get good hiking socks and consider innersoles**

“Boots themselves are only one part of the footwear picture. Really good quality hiking socks are essential for hiking”, says Lockie. “If you put some cheap explorers inside an expensive high quality boot, you're doing yourself a disservice. Good socks are a real luxury and can sometimes make more of a difference than boots.”

### **What makes a good hiking sock?**

“A wool blend is good. A sock that is designed for hiking will have bands around the arch of the foot to keep it nice and tight. Proper hiking socks have a Y-shaped heel pocket and flat profile toe seams.”

“You can also add after-market innersoles to dramatically improve the fit and comfort of your hiking footwear,” says Lockie.



### 3. Should I Use Hiking Poles?

#### Introduction

Hiking poles (also known as trekking poles or walking poles) look a lot like stocks for skiing.

People use them while hiking to aid with propulsion along the trail or to assist with joint support, balance and stability. Some hikers swear by them – but others can't see the point.

We're going to take a look at the different reasons that people use hiking poles and the different pole options that are out there. With all the information, you can make your own decision about whether they will help you and what sort of poles you should choose.

#### How do people use hiking poles to help them hike?

You can read articles or brochures on the correct way to use hiking poles, but the reality is that each person will use them differently, in a way that supports their own physical needs.

We spoke to walkers on a recent Park Trek tour – five out of the ten walkers used hiking poles. Some used one pole, some used two, and each of them had different reasons and techniques.

Here's an overview of their thoughts on walking poles.





### 3. Should I Use Hiking Poles (cont.)?

#### Why I Like & How I Use My Hiking Poles...

**Lesley** uses two poles, mainly for balance. She has broken her ankle twice in the past and is cautious about protecting her weakened ankle. When she walks along level ground, she holds both poles in one hand and doesn't use them. However, when the ground starts to become rocky or unstable, she puts one pole in each hand and uses them to absorb the impact on her ankles and to offer additional stability.

**Carol** uses two poles, and she uses them to propel herself along the track, applying even pressure to each pole in time with her stride. She feels that the technique aids in propelling her forward and that it uses her arm strength as well as her leg strength to assist in walking over a long period. She also notes that using the poles in this way improves upper body strength and for women with grand kids, that is a side bonus – upper body strength is required to pick up your grandchildren.

**Paul** uses one pole adjusted to a short length so his hand can be placed on top of the pole rather than gripping around the hand grip. He places his pole beside him as a third point of contact on the ground to create a tripod effect, adding to his stability and balance.





### 3. Should I Use Hiking Poles (cont.)?

#### Why I Like & How I Use My Hiking Poles... (Cont.)

**Susan** is a doctor whose work has led to an acute awareness of how broken bones contribute to declining health and mortality. She started using walking poles as a precautionary measure – as an aid to balance to protect herself from potential falls and broken bones. Since she has been using the poles, she has also found benefits in using the poles to aid propulsion along the trail and improved upper body strength.

**Joan** uses one pole for balance and to absorb impact on her joints, placing it carefully to offer additional support on uneven ground. Joan will lean onto the pole and rely on it to help support her for large steps up or down or for rock-hopping across a creek.

Other people who use walking poles emphasise the value of using poles to take stress off knees, ankles and hips, and of increasing the walking 'workout' as using your arms with poles increases heart rate and calorie burn.

Other uses of walking poles include checking water depth and wobbly rocks in creek crossings, poking things (like a unusual lump of bark) along the trail, using the poles to lean on for a quick rest break, using them as emergency tent poles and using them as a camera mount or selfie stick (this requires a special attachment feature).

We hope this helps answer the question 'should I use poles?' It depends if 'they help you'!





### 3. Should I Use Hiking Poles (cont.)?

#### How to choose and use different hiking pole features

Things to consider when shopping for walking poles.

**Hiking pole weight** is an important consideration. While hiking, your arms will lift the poles with every step. The heavier the pole, the faster your arms will fatigue. Poles can weigh anywhere between around 250 grams and 600 grams per pair.

**Hiking pole shafts** are generally made of aluminium or carbon fibre. While carbon fibre poles are lighter, they are generally more expensive and weaker than aluminium. When choosing poles, you'll need to make a choice on the weight, strength and price equation.

**Hiking pole length.** To find your right pole length, try this simple technique. Hold your arms with elbows beside you bent at a 90 degrees and hold the poles by the hand grips. The correct pole length should be straight up and resting square to the ground.

**Hiking pole systems & sections.** Most poles have shafts that deconstruct into two or three sections, either by folding or telescoping. While compacting and locking systems vary the end result is a more compact pole for easier transit. (Note, hiking poles are generally not be allowed in plane hand luggage.)

**Fixed versus adjustable-length poles.** Fixed length poles lock in place at one point while adjustable poles can be tailored to personal preferred length. You may find that fixed-length poles are lighter-weight and cheaper, however the benefits of adjustable length are that you can vary the length of the pole depending on the terrain.

**Hiking pole hand grips.** Each manufacturer has their own hand grip design, generally made from rubber, foam or cork (or a combination) materials. Rubber absorbs shock and insulates against temperature, but it is more likely to cause chafing on your hands. Cork resists sweat and may mould a little to the shape of your hands, while foam feels the softest and absorbs sweat but may be weaker in the long term. Poles will also have a variety of grip styles. Ultimately you will need to pick a grip material and style that feels comfortable, if in doubt seek some advice from your trusted retailer.



### 3. Should I Use Hiking Poles (cont.)?

#### How to choose and use different hiking pole features (cont.)

**Hiking pole wrist straps.** Most poles have adjustable wrist straps, allowing you to secure the strap comfortably around your hand. A firm wrist strap will be an aid when using poles for propulsion over even ground. This adds a lot of strength that doesn't rely on the strength of your hand grip. This can be an advantage for users with RSI or other issues which impact on hand strength.

Some pole users express concern about potential injuries from using wrist straps. That is, if you lose your balance and fall with your hands secured in the strap, your hands are not free to support your fall, and there may be an increased likelihood of wrist, elbow and shoulder injury. Others find the straps inconvenient if they wish put down and pick up the poles regularly or pass them from one hand to the other. Using the straps may also increase the risk of pole breakage – if your pole is wedged and you stumble, the pole may be more likely to break. Talk to your trusted retailer if in doubt.

**Hiking pole tips and baskets.** Most poles have a carbide or rubber tip. Rubber tips are best for hard surfaces to absorb some of the impact of the pole hitting the ground and metal tips work best on softer ground. Poles may also have baskets – round disks above the tip. Baskets are most useful when hiking in snow, sand or in soft muddy ground.

**Other features.** Some poles have an internal spring system that aids in shock absorption and can be useful if you are using poles to alleviate stress on joints. Some poles have replaceable parts and accessories, and some come with a stopper for the tip for safety. Some even have camera mounts enabling use of the pole as a 'monopod' or selfie stick.

**What can you expect to pay for good hiking poles?** The pricing of poles varies greatly from \$50 to around \$300. There are plenty of good value mid-priced options.

#### Conclusion – To pole or not? And, if so, which pole?

There's a huge range of hiking pole options and there is no one 'right' choice – you'll have to be guided by the pole that feels comfortable to you and the features you want.

The best advice we can give is that if you are considering poles as an aid to balance and stability, to better support joints, or as an aid to propulsion while walking, then give them a try. Perhaps borrow a friend's poles to try on a local walk or visit an outdoor shop and do a few laps of the store with the poles.

Ultimately, if the poles make you feel more confident and stable and enhance walking enjoyment then don't hesitate to give them a try.





## 4. Walking Fitness Program

### Introduction


Welcome to the Park Trek walking fitness training program. You have taken the first step in signing up for one of our amazing walks. Now you can get the most out of your walking experience by being physically prepared with this program.

We have designed two programs to help you get ready for your multi-day walk, physically and mentally, without injury. These programs are designed for each of (i) **urban** and (ii) **rural and regional** dwellers and you certainly don't need a gym membership. It's incredible how one can train and prepare for a walk using basic facilities and a little imagination.

Ideally you should begin training at least 8 weeks prior to your walk. Even if you have a regular exercise regime you should not assume that you have the necessary hiking fitness. It is important to train and condition the muscles to build agility, strength and endurance.

### Key Principles

- **Start slowly.** Consistency is the key to effective training. Take a step-by-step approach to gradually build your fitness levels. It's a good idea to schedule your training sessions at the same time each week and add a longer walk on the weekend. If it's a struggle during the week try to walk in your lunchbreak.
- **Begin with a basic fitness routine**, transition to an endurance routine, add some strength training and finally include some HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) if possible. HIIT training is short periods of intense anaerobic exercise with less intense recovery periods.
- **Go at your own pace** and do the activities you enjoy to stay motivated. Keep a workout calendar / diary. It's a great way to keep motivated.
- **Vary the terrain.** Don't just walk on flat surfaces, add some undulating walks, hills and even stairs, and sand training if you can. Add some training in variable weather conditions. After all, you will experience varied conditions on the trek.
- **Add a pack.** Begin with a light load and gradually add more. Wear your hiking shoes or boots at this stage to help prevent blisters. Test out your socks as well!
- **Keep up your regular exercise regime** to increase endurance; swimming, cycling, golf etc.
- **Don't forget to warm up before each session.** This vital step allows your body to become accustomed to movement. And of course, stretch at the end of the session



*'Staff tip' – the fitter you are before the trek the more you will enjoy it and the quicker you will recover. Mix it up a little – train every second day or do two days on and one day off*



## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

### URBAN TRAINING PROGRAM

#### **Weeks 1-3**

3 to 4 times per week

**Basic fitness routine** – 30 to 45 minutes of aerobic exercise:

- Stairwells in tall buildings are the perfect midweek or lunchtime hill training, particularly if you go both ways. If you have access to outdoor stairs this is a good chance to train in variable weather conditions. Aim for 3 sets of 5 repeats depending on how many stairs.
- Treadmill walking on a steep incline is efficient hill training. Consider wearing a weight belt or pack. Aim for 3 sets of 10 minutes, with 2 minutes rest between each set.
- Walk around a park, sports oval or along residential streets. In the 45-minute time frame include a minimum of 10 minutes of either longer striding or faster pace walking.

#### Weekends

Drive (or cycle if safe) to the nearest nature reserve and hike for around 1.5 hours (possibly 2 hours) carrying your pack<sup>(1)</sup>. Follow our pack fitting guide to ensure your pack is fitted comfortably and correctly. Add some undulating walking and stairs/steps if available.

<sup>(1)</sup> Pack your lunch, snacks, 1-2 litres of water, extra clothing and extras to add pack weight. Training with 'all your gear' is a great way to ensure hike preparedness. It gets your body used to the weight on your back and the boots on your feet.

#### **Weeks 4-7**

3 to 4 times per week

Continue with the **basic fitness routine** from weeks 1-3 building the time to 1 hour.

- Add 20 to 30 minutes of strength exercises from the list (page 18 "Strength Exercises"). Remember its important to enjoy your training so choose the exercises you like<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>(2)</sup> At this point your diary entries will be very useful to determine your progress. Increase the intensity in your strength exercises from week 7. Do this by increasing the number of repetitions you do or increasing the depth and width of the exercise. It could even include an extension of an exercise or combining 2 exercises. For example: joining the lunges and squats in a sequence and adding some pulses. This will increase the quad muscle 'time under tension'

#### **Weeks 7 & 8**

Continue with the **basic fitness routine** from the previous weeks — 1 hour.

- Continue with 20 to 30 minutes of strength exercises from the list (page 18).
- Add 20 minutes of HIIT from the list (page 7), if possible.

<sup>(3)</sup> Remember its important to enjoy your training so choose the exercises you like. Increase the intensity of your HIIT for the last week, by increasing the number of repetitions.



## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

### RURAL AND REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

#### **Weeks 1-3**

3 to 4 times per week

**Basic fitness routine** – 30 to 45 minutes of aerobic exercise:

- If you live on the coast, stairs leading to and from the beach are the perfect midweek or lunchtime hill training, particularly if you go both ways. This is a good chance to train in variable weather conditions as well. Aim for 3 sets of 5 repeats, depending on how many stairs. Include some walking along the sand. Rocky headlands are a great addition to your training on the beach, as you may explore rocky headlands on your trek.
- If you live in a rural area mark out some lines in a paddock or involve family and kick a footy, throw a basketball or grab a rope and find a flat area to skip. If you live on a property that includes a river or dry creek bed utilize the slope leading to the river. Begin with brisk walking up and down the slope and build up to a slow jog. Build the sets up gradually.
- If there's no park or sports oval close by, walk around one paddock, along the fence line. Depending on the size of the paddock you might like to walk around more than once. In a 45-minute time frame include a minimum of 10 minutes of either longer strides or faster pace walking.

#### Weekends

Drive, walk or cycle (if safe) to the nearest nature reserve and hike for around 1.5 hours (possibly 2 hours) carrying your pack<sup>(1)</sup>. Follow our pack fitting guide to ensure your pack is fitted comfortably and correctly. Add some undulating walking and stairs/steps if available.

<sup>(1)</sup> Pack your lunch, snacks, 1-2 litres of water, extra clothing and extras to add pack weight. Training with 'all your gear' is a great way to ensure hike preparedness. It gets your body used to the weight on your back and the boots on your feet.



## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

### RURAL AND REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM (CONT.)

#### Weeks 4-7

##### 3 to 4 times per week

Continue with the **basic fitness routine** from weeks 1-3 building the time to 1 hour.

- Add 20 to 30 minutes of strength exercises from the list (page 18 Strength Exercises). Remember its important to enjoy your training so choose the exercises you like<sup>(2)</sup>.
- Beach areas and coastal trails often have seats for users to rest and soak up the view. Utilise these seats for triceps dips, push-ups and single leg step ups. If you are walking along the beach as part of your endurance training, you can add some strength training as well. Use a smooth rock for overhead triceps extensions. Lift the arms high and hinge the elbows back, keep them in close to the ears. Or hold a rock in each hand and do bicep curls, keeping your arms at a 90-degree angle and extending back to the thighs.

\*Playgrounds and schools are great areas for strength training. For example, monkey bars are perfect for chin ups - strengthening the biceps and shoulders.

\*Increase the intensity of your strength exercises in week 6 and 7. This could mean increasing the number of repetitions you do or the depth and width of the exercise. It could even include extending an exercise or combining 2 exercises. For example: joining the lunges and squats in a sequence and adding some pulse.

<sup>(2)</sup> At this point your diary entries will be very useful to determine your progress. Increase the intensity in your strength exercises from week 7. Do this by increasing the number of repetitions you do or increasing the depth and width of the exercise. It could even include an extension of an exercise or combining 2 exercises. For example: joining the lunges and squats in a sequence and adding some pulses. This will increase the quad muscle 'time under tension'

#### Weeks 7 & 8

Continue with the **basic fitness routine** from the previous weeks — 1 hour.

- Continue with 20 to 30 minutes of strength exercises from the list (page 18 Strength Exercises).
- Add 20 minutes of HIIT from the list (page 20), if possible. Sand walking/ running is an ideal exercise for HIIT. Go to your nearest beach and place two markers 50m apart. Work between the markers and alternate shuffling, jogging, jumping and skipping. Add some high-knees-running if possible. Repeat until fatigued. You can do this routine with or without a pack, or even half and half. *[Tip – high knees running will strengthen the knee and help with lifting the leg high on the trail, particularly when climbing]*

<sup>(3)</sup> Remember its important to enjoy your training so choose the exercises you like. Increase the intensity of your HIIT for the last week, by increasing the number of repetitions.





## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

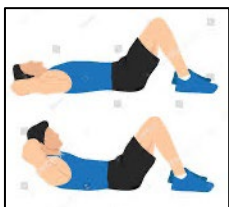
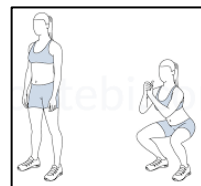
### STRENGTH EXERCISE EXAMPLES

Single-leg step-ups Step up onto a box, high step, ottoman chair. Place your entire foot on the surface and slowly push your weight through the raised foot, keep the head and torso lifted, your other foot will follow. Come into a full-standing position. To descend, bend the first knee you used and bring your foot back to the floor. Follow with the other foot. Continue this movement on the same leg until you feel a burning sensation before switching to the other leg. *[This exercise isolates the leg muscles one at a time to improve balance and stability.]*



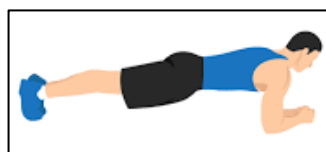
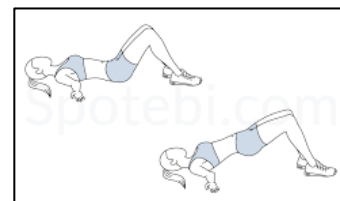
Lunges – static or walking Step back with your back heel lifted and push your front knee forward. Keep the torso lifted and head forward. Bring the back leg forward into standing position. Repeat this movement alternating legs. Walking lunges are a continuation of stepping forward with alternate legs.

Squats Stand with your feet hip distance apart. Lower the torso down, feet turned out slightly, knees pushing outwards, and chest lifted. Transfer all your weight through the heels and push up into a full standing position. *[Lunges and squats are great for building lower body strength and increasing your range of movement. Particularly good for mountain hiking.]*

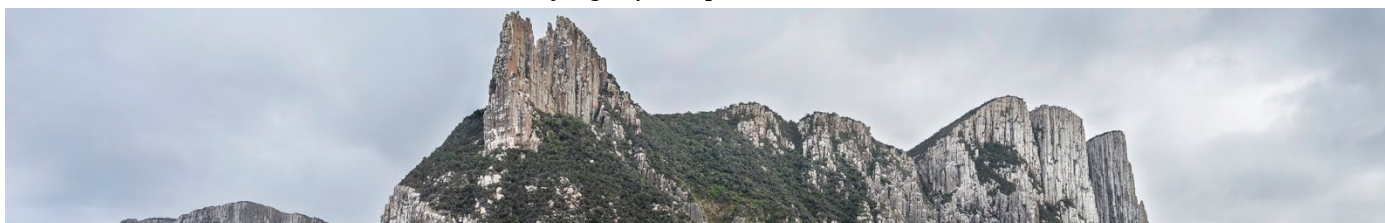


Crunches Lay on your back with your knees bent. Place your fingertips to your temples or softly place your hands behind your head. Gently lift the upper body towards the knees, pause and gently lower the body back to the floor. These can be done in a variety of tempos. Increase the intensity of this movement by lifting the feet off the floor into a C-shaped crunch. *[This exercises can be done on a mat or a swiss ball. When the body is off balance the core kicks into action and stabilizes the body. A hike-related example is stepping from one rock to another.]*

Hip bridges Lay down and bend the knees upwards. Keep your knees and feet close together, brace the core and lift the hips up by squeezing the glutes. Slowly lower the hips back to the floor. Repeat this process and aim to lift the shoulder blades slightly off the floor with each hip bridge. *[Hip bridges will strengthen the core, glutes (butt), hamstrings, lower back and hips, which is very helpful when lifting your leg high on the trail up that steep hill!]*



Planks or Hover Lay face down with forearms crossed. Keep your shoulders, hips and heels in line. Engage the core muscles and remain in a stationery position for as long as possible. Don't lift or drop the glutes. *[Planks are an all-round, full-body strength exercise to improve core stability. They are preferred over crunches for lower back health. They also activate the shoulders which is useful when carrying a pack.]*



## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

### SMALL MUSCLE GROUPS

Triceps Triceps can be strengthened by overhead extensions or triceps dips. If you don't have hand weights you can do triceps dips. All you need is a bench, firm couch or chair. Have your hands shoulder width apart and legs extended, lower your butt off the chair pushing your weight into your arms. Ensure your elbows are tracking to the back of the room. Keep a bend in the elbows to take the weight off the elbow joint and lift the body back to the seated position. Gradually build the repetitions until you feel the tension in the back of the arm. *[Tricep dips transfer your body weight into your upper arms, strengthening the upper arm and shoulders. This will help with pulling yourself up onto a rock or over a log.]*

Biceps Biceps can be strengthened by triceps dips as well. If you don't have any hand weights or a barbell, pushups are an alternative. These can be done on your knees or toes. Have your hands shoulder width apart and lower the torso so the chest is level with your elbows. Push the elbows out on the downward phase and straighten them on the upward phase. If you are on your knees you can lift your feet off the floor for more intensity. You can also bring your chest lower to the floor, past your elbow. *[Bicep strength will help with shifting the load in your pack to sit comfortably on your back and shoulders.]*

### **ENDURANCE**

#### Stairs training

Push yourself on the ascent using the incline training method (body in a slight bent over position). Then concentrate on stabilizing the body and pushing your weight through the upper legs (quads) on the descent. If the pressure is too much on the knees you can step forward with a sideways gait on the front foot, so the weight is not concentrated in the cartilage surrounding the patella. *[Stair training works against gravity, lifting your entire body. It strengthens your leg muscles while building your cardio capacity. This is great for longer trails.]*





## 4. Walking Fitness Program (cont.)

### HIGH INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)

#### Box jumps

Use the same method for single-leg step-ups, but instead of lifting your legs alternately you jump onto the step with both legs at the same time. Use a lower bench to avoid tripping.

*[This will build cardio fitness while maintaining strength fitness.]*

#### Burpees or squat thrust

Begin in a standing position and move into a squat position with both hands on the ground. Kick your feet back into a plank position with arms extended. Immediately return your feet into the squat position and extend upwards into a standing position.

*[This builds aerobic capacity, agility and coordination.]*

#### Mountain climbers

Begin in a plank position with arms extended and bring one knee into the chest. Quickly switch and pull the other knee into the chest. Continue to switch knees so that you are using a running motion.

*[This full-body movement builds upper body strength as a result of holding your body weight for a long period.]*

#### Jumping Jack or Star Jump

Start with your feet together and arms down by your side. Jump to a position with your legs spread wide and hands touching overhead. Jump to return your feet together and arms back down by your side.

*[This improves cardio fitness and coordination.]*





## 5. Appendix – How Our Walks Are Graded

### The Australian Walking Track Grading System

#### How a track gets its grade

The grading system assesses a walk's difficulty based on several criteria, including: experience required, steps, gradient, path quality and signage. The walk's final grade is based on the most difficult of these 5 criteria, rather than an average. So some walks will have criteria that meet an easier grade.

Take a look at our guide below, and before your next adventure ask yourself 'is this walk suitable for me?'



#### Grade 1

No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5km.



#### Grade 2

No bushwalking experience required. The track is hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10km.



#### Grade 3

Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km.



#### Grade 4

Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.



#### Grade 5

Very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20km.