

TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR BIKE EVENTS



*Get fit, have fun and enjoy your
challenge of a lifetime!*

STARTING OUT

KNOW YOUR OWN ABILITIES

Everyone has their own physical and mental abilities, goals and aspirations; therefore, devising your own training programme personal to your needs will be the key to your success. Classic Tours cycling challenges are designed for people of average fitness, but you do have to be prepared to train! These guidelines will give you suggestions to assist you in preparing for the challenge. Use it as you see fit and modify it for your own purposes. Keep in mind that your ultimate goal is to be as physically prepared as possible for the challenge.

The majority of people taking part in these cycling challenges are not cyclists. It is therefore imperative that you follow a reasonably serious course of training in order to get the maximum benefit. Although you may feel that you are fit enough, remember the ride will include challenges that are not in your normal daily routine.

Whilst these events are not meant for specialist cyclists, they are nevertheless a challenge and require a high standard of fitness and understanding of how to cycle along uneven terrain, narrow paths and steep gradients.

YOUR FITNESS

Getting yourself fit is all part of the challenge. You will be cycling distances averaging 75km a day, over successive days, often in hot temperatures, and over hilly and rugged terrain, sometimes including dirt roads. This will require a degree of endurance, leg strength, aerobic fitness and a tolerance to sit on a bicycle saddle for up to 8 hours a day. You can help to avoid possible aches and pains by slowly building up your fitness. The fitter you are the more you will enjoy the challenge ahead!

FINDING TIME TO TRAIN

If you have a busy lifestyle of work, family and fundraising commitments then draw up a weekly training plan. Be creative in your training and start doing things such as getting up an hour earlier to go for a bike ride, cycling to work or to the shops and going to the gym. When you have the option, choose to cycle rather than drive or take the bus – this might mean investing in a decent lock and waterproofs. Don't worry if you miss a week of your plan, just keep focussed and get back on your bike the following week.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR TRAINING

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

The training programme below has been put together as a rough guide, we are aware that other commitments such as work, family and fundraising may not allow you to stick rigidly to a schedule. However, where possible the programmes have been designed to enable you to fit training around work. You may wish to remove or reduce the sessions, or add time and increase the number of sessions. It's important to make it work for you – be realistic with your time and your fitness and what you want to achieve.

GENERAL FITNESS

Don't just cycle to get fit – cross train with other sports e.g. swimming, running and going to the gym, you'll enjoy training more by breaking it up. Having a good general level of fitness is key, but time in the saddle is vital. Ask a fitness instructor at a local gym to put together a weight and stretching programme. Spinning is another excellent way to build endurance and anaerobic fitness – spinning is a high energy, in door stationary cycling based group fitness program, where the instructor takes participants on a virtual outdoor road race complete with hills, fast flats and downhill's, valleys, and finish lines. The class can make a noticeable difference to your cycling fitness and technique – many people coming to cycling tend to gear too high (hard) and pedal too slowly, spinning instructors teach fast pedalling against less resistance which is usually a much better approach.

BE PREPARED

The secret to preventing injuries and preparing yourself to get the most out of your training is to develop a good, personal mileage base. The best strategy is to let the terrain and how you feel tell you when to make more or less effort. It's also important to make sure you are well fitted to your bike – a local bike shop or club can help you with this.

GET MOTIVATED

Remember the purpose of your training is to help you achieve the trip of a lifetime. The more you put in before you go, the more you will enjoy the challenge whilst you are there. Keep in mind this goal at all times. You can help yourself with this by planning your rides for enjoyment as well as workout – try to ride to places you want to go, rather than simply doing the distance and hours.

BEATING THE WEATHER

It's all too easy during the winter months to make excuses not to train, but there are lots of fun ways to get fit and avoid the cold weather:

- Spinning is an excellent way to build up cycling fitness on a cold wet day.
- Gym work on the bike will help improve your fitness
- Aerobic classes and swimming are great for overall fitness
- When the sun is shining get your bike out and make the most of it
- Train with a friend, it doesn't have to be someone on the challenge, ask around – one of your friends will want to get fit. Make arrangements to meet up and train together.

EATING FOR FITNESS

Your diet will play a key role in your fitness, and it's something to start thinking about when you start your training. In the initial stages of your training try to reduce your saturated fat intake. As you start to increase the distances cycled, you will need to up your calories. Try to eat one meal a day high in carbohydrate to give you the extra energy you need. Ideal foods include potatoes, bread, pasta and rice. Remember a balanced diet is always best so you get your daily requirement of vitamins and minerals. Include fruit and vegetables as well as meat and fish. The other important thing to note here is fluid intake – it is essential to increase your fluid intake when exercising as you lose a lot.

The overall advice is to be aware of your diet and try to eat healthy balanced meals, including carbohydrates to give you the extra energy and drinking water to replace lost fluids.

TOP 10 TIPS!

1. Start cycling slowly and gently as this is one of the best ways to **warm up**. Once you are warmed up you can do some stretches. Warm down and stretching exercises after cycling are equally important.
2. If you have not cycled for some time, **begin slowly**; be realistic about your targets.
3. It is crucial to find stretches of **hilly terrain** in order to experience the difficulties of cycling uphill and learn how best to overcome them, and learn how to best use your gears on the hills.
4. As you get nearer the date of departure plan **a number of longer rides** – say three or four of an hour per week – and at least a three-hour ride during the weekend, ideally ride on consecutive days as well.
5. Please ensure your itinerary includes **cycling on dirt roads, towpaths or bridleways**. The importance of cycling on unsurfaced paths cannot be over-emphasized. Cycling "off road" is very different to riding on a tarmac surface. The way the bike feels, the use of gears and brakes are all different, so it is very important to experience this and learn the techniques needed.
6. Please make sure that your **saddle is at the right height**. A good starting point for this is to sit in your normal riding position (next to a wall, or with someone supporting you), put a HEEL on a pedal, rotate it to the lowest point of its revolution, at this point your leg should be just straight. When you ride, keep the BALL of your foot centred on the pedal, your knee should never fully straighten when riding. From this starting point, adjust the saddle up or down slightly to find the ideal position. If you can comfortably touch the ground when seated, your saddle is almost certainly too low – the result is likely to be tiredness and sore knees.
7. Learn to **use your gears properly**. Slightly faster pedalling against less resistance (lower gears) is almost always preferable to slower pedalling against more resistance (high gears). This can feel counter intuitive ("I'm not getting anywhere!") but in the long run it is a far healthier approach. New cyclists are often unwilling to change gear as often as they should, so don't be scared, play with your gears until it becomes second nature.
8. Hills – **change gear as soon as you think** you might need to, before you are pedalling hard and the chain and gear system are under strain. It's much easier to change to higher gears on a hill if you have chosen too low a gear, than to go into lower gears if the climb turns out to be steeper than you expected. Practice makes perfect!
9. On your cycling training routines do not forget to **take water, a small medical kit, repair kit and helmet** with you at all times. Also pack food that you want to eat –energy bars and drinks are hardly ever necessary, and never taste as good as real food. Bikes on the event will have **water bottle carriers**. It would be very useful to practice taking the bottle out of a carrier while cycling so that you can have a drink without stopping – do this in traffic free areas if you are learning.
10. Although this may sound a bit daunting it is not a race and there are no prizes for the winner. We offer plenty of support and if you feel that you've had enough there will be a vehicle that you and your bike can travel in.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Why not customise this to suit you and stick it in a prominent place like on the fridge door for that extra bit of motivation!

6 MONTHS TO GO!

Get into a routine of exercising regularly

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
3 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1 x Cycle Ride a week, up to 10 miles2 x Aerobic Training a week of 30-35 minutes	Longest Ride: 10 miles Monthly Mileage: 30 – 40 miles	

5 MONTHS TO GO!

Building a strong foundation of fitness

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
4 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2 x Cycle Rides a week, up to 15 miles2 x Aerobic Training of 40 minutes within the month2 x Strength Training within the month	Longest Ride: 15 miles Monthly Mileage: 70 – 90 miles	

4 MONTHS TO GO!

Build your endurance & strength

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
4 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2 x Cycle Rides a week, aim for 10 – 20 miles each session Cycle for 2 consecutive days on one week2 x Aerobic Training of 40 minutes within the month2 x Strength Training within the month	Longest Ride: 20 miles Monthly Mileage: 90 – 120 miles	

3 MONTHS TO GO!

Focus on training both mental & physical aspects of yourself

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
4 or 5 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">3 x Cycle Rides a week, aim for 10 – 25 miles each session Cycle for 2 consecutive days on 2 weeks1 x Aerobic Training session per week of 30 – 40 minutes2 x Strength Training within the month	Longest Ride: 25 miles Monthly Mileage: 120 – 150 miles	

2 MONTHS TO GO!

Continue to build your mental & physical endurance & strength

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
4 or 5 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x Cycle Rides a week, aim for 20 – 35 miles each session On one weekend try 35 miles one day, 20 miles on the next • 1 x Aerobic Training session per week of 30 – 40 minutes • 2 x Strength Training within the month 	Longest Ride: 35 miles Monthly Mileage: 150 – 200 miles	

1 MONTH TO GO!

Maximise your training to give you that extra endurance & strength which you will need

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
4 or 5 sessions per week of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x Cycle Rides a week, aim for 25 – 50 miles each session On one weekend try 45 miles one day, 40 miles on the next • 1 x Aerobic Training session per week of 30 – 40 minutes • 2 x Strength Training within the month 	Longest Ride: 50 miles Monthly Mileage: 200 – 250 miles	

1 WEEK TO GO!

Training Schedule	Cycling Aim	Completed / Date
Reduce your training to prevent injury and tiredness. In the last week you should do no more than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x Cycle Rides of 10 miles 	Longest Ride: 10 miles	

Remember this is just a guideline – adapt the programme to your current fitness levels and your lifestyle. The more training you do, the more you will enjoy the event.

GOOD LUCK!!

TRAINING PROGRAMME EXPLAINED

- **Cycle Rides** – this is the most important part of training, you have to be comfortable in your saddle. Try to include some hilly terrain and dirt roads. Practice with your gears too. Remember to include cycling on consecutive days as per the plan, you have to get your muscles used to it.
- **Spinning** – Indoor cycling using a stationary bike in a class setting. Instructor leads the class through routines including hill climbs, sprints and interval training.
- **Aerobic Training** – this could also be done on your bike, but if you fancy some variety why not try running, swimming, cross-country running, spinning or speed walking.
- **Strength Training** – should include exercises working mostly on upper body strength. Include exercises for arms, shoulders, back and abdominals. Each exercise should include 3 sets of 10-15 repetitions (reps) so that muscle failure occurs on the last set. You do not have to join a health club to get a good strength work out – you can do sit ups and press ups at home.
- **Rest Days** – do not train 7 days a week. Your body needs time to rest in between the training. The training plan suggests 3 – 5 sessions per week. Allow your body time to recover.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

- www.sustrans.org.uk – Explore over 6,500 miles of National Cycle Network. You can buy maps online for your area to give ideas of where to train
- www.ctc.org.uk - ideas and suggestions of where to cycle, backed up by comprehensive route and country information
- www.britishcycling.org.uk – all the news from the cycling world as well as great tips on cycling commuting and events happening near you.
- www.lcc.org.uk – essential reading for any London based cyclists, includes a online journey planner tool.
- www.cyclescheme.co.uk - if you haven't already got a bike, why not get one tax free!
- www.cycle-route.com – a great website to help you plan routes all over the UK. If you need inspiration for a new route it's well worth a look.

Classic Tours Training Guidelines have been designed by Gideon Seligman and Gina Thomas. Gideon is a Tour Manager with over 20 years experience leading charity challenge events. He's helped people achieve their goals and reach the finish line on hundreds of challenges all over the world. Gina has a degree in Sport Science and together they have put together a plan to help set you on your way to challenge success!

GOOD LUCK & ENJOY THE RIDE!