

**QUESTION:** Do I really have to train?

**ANSWER:** Yes! Yes! And Yes! Cycling Challenges are designed for people of average fitness as long as you are prepared to train. You should start training several months before the event. How you start training for a long-distance bike ride depends largely on your present fitness level, age and the amount of cycling you have done in the past. There are various ways to train for your challenge; below are various training regimes that can be adapted to fit into your personal lifestyle.

### **Non-Cyclists / Low Fitness**

The sample 10-week training programme below shows how you will need to gradually build up the mileage to be able to cycle for up to 8 hours a day. To begin with though, avoid overstretching yourself – don't ride in a gear that's too difficult or as fast as you can. Regular training sessions will allow you to develop your speed and adjust to different gears.

People who have not ridden a bike for several years or indeed at all would be advised to start their training regime earlier than shown below. Mileage should be built up gradually to avoid injury and over-exercise, and to establish a good base fitness on which to build the stamina levels you will need on a cycle challenge.

### **Cadence**

From the outset you should attempt to develop your cadence, which is the speed at which your legs rotate (RPM); this will improve your aerobic capacity, meaning that your heart and lungs will grow stronger and be less stressed when cycling or exercising.

To develop your cadence you should select the gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling on whatever gradient. If you can keep a steady RPM of around 60 -70 most of the time this would greatly aid the speed at which you become cycling fit, and will increase your strength and stamina which you can then build on. Before you know it you will find yourself being able to push harder gears while maintaining the same RPM. After you have become comfortable with your cadence and riding position, it will be time to start stepping up the mileage.

### **Social Cyclists / Moderately Fit**

This category might include anyone who has been cycling intermittently over the years, perhaps by cycling to work in the summer or regular Sunday rides with the family. As you will have a degree of basic fitness and confidence built up from previous cycling, 3 months or so of training should prepare you for the ride.

The 10-week sample training programme below should enable you to gradually build up your mileage to be able to take on the challenge. If you feel you will need more training time, plan ahead and start training earlier. Be honest with yourself: you will enjoy the challenge much more if your fitness levels are good!

## **Regular Cyclists / Fit**

This category would include people who cycle regularly throughout the year, whether it be commuting 20 miles or more to work a day or training seriously with weekend races and time trials. People within this category should already have a good training schedule and be amply fit to tackle a cycle challenge, though should probably step up training for long days of riding.

People included within the commuting bracket may find it a good idea to step up their weekly mileage by cycling a longer route to work, or doing a brief morning or evening ride and by also doing regular weekend rides of around 50 miles or more.

## **Fitting Training Into Your Busy Life**

This training guide is just that, a 'guide'! With work, family and fundraising commitments you might not be able to follow it to the letter, but you can maximise your training time by making some small changes to your routine.

- Get up an hour earlier and go out for a quick cycle with some stretching in the morning before work, it will get you moving and ready for the day!
- If you can cycle to work, do so. If you can't cycle the whole distance between work and home, why not cycle to a station/bus stop in between home and work and then continue your journey on public transport. You will obviously need to be happy that you are able to leave your bike in a safe and secure place!
- Use your lunchtimes to take regular brisk walks or cycle around where you work.
- Find a steep set of stairs i.e. five floors of a department store/office block and climb them five times, at least three times per week.
- Try your local leisure centre or gym. You may be able to get a fitness instructor to design a programme specifically for you. Make use of the exercise bikes or try spinning classes, where you can train hard with other people and an instructor. You still need to cycle as much as possible in 'real' conditions. The more you can train in similar conditions to your challenge, both in terms of terrain and weather, the better.
- Try to get to some hilly country at the weekends to experience cycling on different surfaces, hills and of course the weather in all its variety!
- Train using the kit you want to use in your challenge. If you're planning to use SPDs (clipless pedals) on your challenge, get used to them well in advance – most people fall off a few times when getting used to them!
- Whether you're planning to use a small rucksack, camelbak or large bum-bag to carry the things you need access to during the day, get used to it when training.
- Try to cycle some consecutive long days; you might ache a bit after one full day's cycling but the best way to improve your fitness and stamina is to go out again the next day!
- Cycling is very beneficial to your body and the best way to prepare for your challenge but you can add other activities to your training to improve your general fitness. Playing squash, tennis or badminton, going to the gym, cycling or swimming for an hour or more will improve your fitness and keep you interested in your training. While you may not stick to the training guide exactly, you need to make time to train. You will enjoy the challenge far more if you are physically fit!

## 10-week Training Programme

Weeks 1-2:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	Cycle 20-30 mins	Rest day	Cycle 20-30 mins	Rest day	Cycle 90-120 mins	

Weeks 3:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Cycle 40mins (8-10 miles)	Rest day	Cycle 40mins (8-10 miles)	Rest day	Cycle 40mins (8-10 miles)	Cycle 120-150 mins (25-30miles)	

Weeks 4-5:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	10-15miles	Rest day	10-15miles	Rest day	Cycle 120-150 mins (30-40miles)	

Weeks 6-7:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest day	Cycle 20-30 mins	Rest day	Cycle 20-30 mins	Rest day	Cycle 90-120 mins	

Weeks 8:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
10miles	Rest day	15-20miles	Rest day	15-20miles	Cycle 45-60miles	

Weeks 9:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
20-25miles	Rest day	25-30miles	Rest day	20-25miles	Cycle 50-65miles	

Weeks 10:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
15miles	Rest day	25miles	Rest day	25miles	Cycle 65-70miles	

The week before you go!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
10miles	5miles	10miles	5miles	Rest day	Race Day!	