

Physical preparations

Get into shape with the VentureCo 8 week build-up.

Good health and a basic level of fitness are required of our Venturers. All of the activities you are likely to encounter are within the capability of any normal healthy individual. So that you can maximise your contribution, it's important that you are physically prepared. Follow the exercises below and you will be ready for the challenges ahead.

The treks during the Venture's Expedition Phase will be your main physical challenge. The treks are through mountainous terrain and follow trails that are rarely level. As an additional challenge, you'll be carrying your own gear on your back and a share of the group's camping equipment. To go straight into the mountains without any physical preparation can be both humiliating and depressing. Legs wobble, hearts pound and lungs heave – is it worth it? It's far better to get in shape before you go, not as you go.

On the bright side: all our treks are circular: that is to say, they return to the start point, which means you can leave your city clothes behind and only trek with what you need in the mountains.

The best physical preparation for trekking is to develop walking stamina and rhythm. Mid section and upper body strength should also be toned for load carrying. Don't worry if you think that you are too small or light to trek with a pack, the most that anyone carries on the trail is up to a maximum 25% of body weight so the effort is the same for all.

You probably take part in a sport that already gives you sufficient exercise for trek fitness but there are ways to fine-tune your exercise regime. Set out below are a series of exercises for an 8 week build up programme. No special equipment is required and they don't take long so you can easily work them into your timetable. Remember, the success of any training programme depends on you doing it regularly!

Six steps to get to the top

- 1. Trekking Stamina and Rhythm:** the best way to develop your trekking stamina is walking, swimming, slow running and cycling: any exercise that expands the lungs, pushes your heart rate up and toughens the feet and legs.
 - a) Walking.** Find an area where you can walk for at least an hour, preferably with uphill sections. Load your pack to 25% of your body weight and walk concentrating on developing a steady walking rhythm. If you can get away for a day or a weekend into a mountainous region, carry your pack on a full day walk that includes plenty of uphill and downhill work. Wear your boots, this is an excellent opportunity to break them in.
 - b) Running** is the quickest and most effective way of building up strength in your legs and developing your stamina. Before you start, make sure that you have a proper pair of shoes suitable for running in. Stamina is more important than flat out speed, so longer distance exercises at a slower and steadier pace will be more beneficial than a series of sprints. Start by running for 20 minutes three or 4 days a week adding 5 minutes on per week until you can comfortably run for one hour. Remember that speed is not important – go as slow as you like but don't stop!
 - c) Cycling** is also a beneficial exercise, especially on uphill sections.
- 2. Better Balance:** This simple exercise develops your sense of balance, which is crucial when walking with a pack over rough terrain. Do step ups onto a bench adjusted so that when your foot is on the step, your knee is bent at 90 degrees. Hold a bar across your shoulders behind your neck. While keeping your torso vertical and hips tucked forward, step up onto the bench with your right leg, then bring up your left leg. Stand straight and steady for 2 or 3 seconds. Quickly step back down, leading with your left leg. Repeat 10 times, then switch sides so you step up with your left leg, also 10 times, to make a set.
- 3. Stronger Hamstrings:** Toning the area around your backside gives you an edge when climbing uphill. Lie on your stomach on a bench with your hips at the end of the bench and your legs

hanging straight down. Grip a football between your ankles and slowly lift your legs until they are parallel with your body. Start and control the movement with your hamstrings rather than by swinging your legs. Hold it for a count of 3, then slowly lower the ball and hold it within an inch or two of the floor, then raise again. Repeat 10 times for a set.

4. **Stronger Shins and Calves:** To reduce the possibility of shin splints and overburdening your Achilles tendons you should strengthen and balance the muscles in your lower leg. For your shins, stand about 15 cm from the wall, knees straight, back pressed against the wall. Lift your toes up as far as you can and hold for 3 seconds, then lower. Repeat 10 times for a set. For your calves, stand on the edge of a step and let your heels drop down slightly. Starting in that position, raise your body up on your toes. Repeat 10 times for a set.
5. **Stronger “Core” Strength:** A solid midsection means better walking posture, better support for your back and less susceptibility to fatigue. These core muscles initiate virtually every move you make and as they tire out your shoulders, hips and knees start to go out of sync. For your abdominals the simplest, best exercise is the crunch. Before you start, tighten your stomach muscles and press your pelvis down so you’re forcing the small of your back into the floor. With hand clasped behind your head, curl up – one vertebra at a time – so your shoulder blades lift off the floor, but no further. Breathe out as you curl up and don’t strain your neck. Hold yourself up for 3 seconds then slowly curl back down again. Do 10 at first and work up to 40.
6. **Stronger Upper Body Strength:** To support your back and comfortably carry your pack you should develop strength and stability in your chest and shoulders. Push-ups are the easiest exercise for toning your upper body. When doing push ups, keep your back straight (no sagging) and head up. Girls should only do push-ups with their knees on the floor. For variation, “walk” your hands over each other between each push up so that you end up doing a full circle. Repeat 10 times for a set.

IMPORTANT: the exercises listed above are intended purely to tone your body in preparation for your VentureCo expedition. They are not intended to represent an intensive physical fitness-training programme. If you suffer any injury or experience any undue pain or discomfort when doing these or any other exercises STOP your training immediately and seek medical advice.

Venture Title	Duration	Week of Fitness chart	Notes
Inca	4 months	6	3 treks above 4,000 m
Patagonia	4 months	8	9 day Patagonia trek
Maya	4 months	4	
Aztec-Maya	4 months	4	
Himalaya	4 months	8	Everest Base Camp, 18 days to 5,400 m
Rift Valley	4 months	8	Mt Kenya 4,985m Kilimanjaro 5,895
Indochina	4 months	6	
VentureGo Peru	6 weeks	6	Inca Trail 4,000 m
VentureGo Ecuador & Galapagos	6 weeks	4	Jungle trek, low altitude but humid conditions
VentureGo Africa	6 weeks	8	Kilimanjaro 5,895 m
VentureGo Nepal	6 weeks	8	Everest Base Camp, 12 days to 5,400 m
Extreme in Andes	6 weeks	8 +	Mt Pisco 5,500m Huayna Potosi 6,000 m
Extreme in Africa	6 weeks	8 +	Ruwenzoris 5,109 m Mt Kenya 4,985 & Kilimanjaro 5,895m

To get the most out of your Venture you should be able to complete the exercises in the chart to the end of the week indicated, but bear in mind, you can never be too fit!

VentureCo 8 week Training Programme

Week	1. Running	✓	2. Balance	✓	3. Hamstrings	✓	4. Calves/Shins	✓	5. Core crunches	✓	6. Push-ups	✓
1	Mon 20 min. run Wed 20 min run Fri 20 min run		Tue 1 set Sat 1 set		Tue 1 set Thu 1 set		Thu 1 set Sat 1 set		Mon 10 Wed 10 Fri 10		Mon 1 set Wed 1 set Fri 1 set	
2	Mon 20 min. run Wed 25 min run Fri 25 min run		Tue 1 set Sat 1 set		Tue 1 set Thu 1 set		Thu 1 set Sat 1 set		Mon 15 Wed 15 Fri 15		Mon 2 sets Wed 1 set Fri 1 set	
3	Mon 20 min. run Wed 30 min run Fri 30 min run		Tue 2 sets Sat 2 sets		Tue 2 sets Thu 2 sets		Thu 2 sets Sat 2 sets		Mon 20 Wed 15 Fri 15		Mon 3 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	
4	Mon 20 min. run Wed 35 min run Fri 35 min run		Tue 2 sets Sat 2 sets		Tue 2 sets Thu 2 sets		Thu 2 sets Sat 2 sets		Mon 25 Wed 15 Fri 15		Mon 3 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	
5	Mon 20 min. run Wed 35 min run Fri 40 min run		Tue 3 sets Sat 3 sets		Tue 3 sets Thu 3 sets		Thu 3 sets Sat 3 sets		Mon 30 Wed 20 Fri 15		Mon 4 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	
6	Mon 20 min. run Wed 40 min run Fri 45 min run		Tue 3 sets Sat 3 sets		Tue 3 sets Thu 3 sets		Thu 3 sets Sat 3 sets		Mon 35 Wed 25 Fri 15		Mon 4 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	
7	Mon 20 min. run Wed 45 min run Fri 50 min run		Tue 4 sets Sat 4 sets		Tue 4 sets Thu 4 sets		Thu 4 sets Sat 4 sets		Mon 40 Wed 25 Fri 15		Mon 5 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	
8	Mon 20 min. run Wed 55 min run Fri 60 min run		Tue 4 sets Sat 4 sets		Tue 4 sets Thu 4 sets		Thu 4 sets Sat 4 sets		Mon 40 Wed 35 Fri 15		Mon 5 sets Wed 2 sets Fri 1 set	