

The Thousand Lakes

The Ultimate Pyrenees Trek

France | 2,833m



360 
EXPEDITIONS

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The **Pyrenees** straddle the border between **France** and **Spain** for 400+km and rise to 3,400m. The stunning **1000-lakes** route through the Parc National d'Aigüestortes i Sant Maurici in **Catalonia** weaves between winding rivers, sheer ravines, cool lakes, raging waterfalls and fertile marshes, and reaches some of the range's highest summits, fittingly, 'Aigüestortes' means 'twisted waters' in Catalan – you'll see a lot of them! 360's majestic 4-day **trek** explores these hidden beauties and embraces the unique camaraderie and warm hospitality of the remotely located mountain refuges.

We'll be trekking through high mountain forest, rich in beech and pine, crossing meadows and mountainsides blanketed in colourful flowers and passing hundreds of sparkling snow-fed lakes. To reach the high

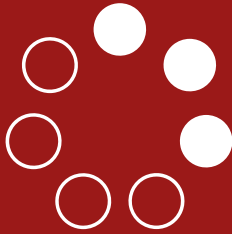
passes that lead from one valley to the next where vibrant alpine flowers dot the rugged landscape we cross eerie landscapes dotted with huge boulders. With luck, you'll spot the world's largest bird of prey, the Lammergier, circling above, whilst Marmots whistle warnings to each other on the rock-strewn slopes.

Europe doesn't have to be tame. This is an absorbing trek of extreme contrasts, taking in Catalonia's iconic peaks and entering lush worlds rarely seen by travellers. It will challenge everything you thought you knew about European mountains.

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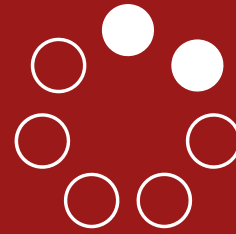
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Physical – P3

This trip is physically tough. Frequent exercise is necessary to prepare properly for this expedition. Regular walking mixed with training at the gym to build up endurance and cardiovascular fitness is key. Expect to be able to do 8 hour days in hilly and often steep terrain, carrying a pack of 6-10kg in weight with the occasional extra long day.



Technical – T2

Consider this a trek, although there may be occasion to use hands for short sections of easy scrambling. No previous climbing or trekking experience is necessary.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Arrive Luchon

We will meet you at Toulouse airport and transfer you back to Luchon where you'll have some time to settle into the guest house.

If there is time this afternoon and weather permitting, we can organise an afternoon of rock climbing before returning to the guest house for an evening briefing covering essential information for the following days, talks on food, personal equipment and weather forecasting before a relaxing dinner.

(D)

DAY 2 : Trek to Restanca Refuge

After an early breakfast, we'll transfer (1.5hr drive) to our start point in the Val d'Aran in Catalonia, Spain. Without further ado, we launch into this spectacular trek. Initially we trek through native stands of Pyrenean black Pine opened up by lush meadows of Alpine flowers. A steady climb brings us to our first big lake near the Refuge de Colomers where we have lunch. From here we enter a wild and rocky landscape as we make a steady ascent to the Col de Caldes (2,572m) our high point of the day. From here we head to the Port de Oelhacrestada (2,475m) from where we begin our descent to the Restanca refuge passing the Lac Deth cap deth Port where we can have a paddle or a dip before reaching the friendly Restanca refuge situated at the lake sharing its name. (BLD)

(Trekking time 6 -7 hours)

DAY 3 : Refuge de Ventosa I Calvell

After a hearty breakfast we start by making our way back up to the Port de Oelhacrestada from where we begin our ascent of Montardo (2,500m), it'll take us about two hours to reach the summit where we'll have a well-deserved lunch and enjoy the fantastic views. We'll spend the afternoon descending past the Estany des Monges, the Estany de les Mangades and the Estany de Travessany until we reach the refuge of Ventosi I Cavell which many call the most spectacularly located refuge in the Pyrenees.

(BLD)

(Trekking time 7-8 hours)

DAY 4 : Refugi de Saboredo

Another hearty breakfast awaits us before we and suitably fuelled we'll start our trek eastwards towards the Port to Colomers, at 2,610m the highest point of our trek and a great point to stop for a snack and soak up the views. Our path leads us past more stunning lakes before our final climb of the day up to the Port de Ratera (2,594m) from where we begin our descent to the beautifully located Saboredo Refuge,

(BLD)

(Trekking time 8-9 hours)

DAY 5 : Out via col de Caldes and seven lake circuit

Today we say a spectacular goodbye to the thousand lake area by climbing over the Coth de Sendrosa before descending into luscious alpine meads with crystal clear tinkling rivers and old growth forest and back down to our starting point, Baños de Tredos for our transfer back to France and a fantastic celebration meal.

(B)

(Trekking time 4-5 hours)

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ITINERARY

DAY 6 : Bagneres de Luchon and flight home

Depending on your flight times you can spend the morning relaxing in Luchon whether it be souvenir shopping or relaxing in the spa.

If you are looking for something adventurous then why not spend the morning enjoying any of the outdoor activities this beautiful mountain town offers, such as paragliding and mountain biking.

Transfer to Toulouse Airport.

(B)

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Daysack

40-60L rucksack that is well worn in and with a good waist belt. A waterproof cover is advisable (remember that these covers are not 100% waterproof but act as a barrier).

Drybags

Pack some fresh clothing into bags to keep them dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks

Waterproof rucksack cover

To protect rucksack from rain

Sleeping Gear

Sleeping bag liner

Silk is best for keeping the bag clean and you a little warmer

Headwear

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Sunglasses

Category 4 wrap around style is highly recommended. These sunglasses allow for the highest available protection against harmful UV light found at altitude and from glare from snow and sand surfaces. Worth spending money on good UV filters. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Sunblock

Buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude

Upper Body

Base layer x 2

This is the layer closest to the skin and its principal function is to draw (wick) moisture and sweat away from the skin. You can also get thermal base layers for use at higher altitudes that provide an additional insulative layer while still drawing sweat during times of high exertion

Mid layer

These are typically lightweight microfleece or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack

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KIT LIST

T-shirts

A couple of T-shirts are advisable for this summer expedition. The days are reasonably warm (with high temperatures at lower altitudes)

Hard Shell

These jackets are thin, highly waterproof and windproof and worn over all other items of clothing. You'll find these made of Gore-Tex or other proprietary waterproof yet breathable technology. Inexpensive hard shells that aren't breathable will prevent evaporation, making you sweat intensely and are not recommended

Soft Shell

These should be windproof (not all are) and insulative. They are mostly made of soft polyester and sometimes resemble a neoprene finish which makes them very mobile and comfortable to wear. While offering a degree of weather repellence, they are not waterproof

Gloves

Lower Body

Shorts

A couple of shorts are advisable for this summer expedition. The days are reasonably warm (with high temperatures at lower altitudes)

Trekking trousers

These tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts

Underwear

Merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Waterproof trousers

A lightweight pair of Goretex/eVent trousers that will act as a great windproof too

Feet

Walking boots

Well worn in 4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support

Spare laces

Just in case

Comfortable trainers/Crocs

For use in the evenings. With most refuges, you will need to take your boots off when you go in. Some provide croc/slippers but not all.

Trekking socks x 3

Single layer or wearing 2 pairs is a personal choice and lighter weight merino wool is a good option

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KIT LIST

Hydration

Water bottles / bladder x 2

2L capacity either in a combination of bladder and Nalgene bottle or just Nalgene bottles

Water purification

Although generally all water is boiled some prefer to double up and add purification tabs as well. Always good to have in your bag

Evening Wear

Evening clothes

Comfortable clothes for the evening

Toiletries

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

Toilet paper

Provided on the mountain but a spare in your daysack may be useful if you need to hide behind a rock between camps

Wet wipes

Great for washing when shower facilities become a thing of the past, one packet will suffice

Expedition towel

Towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are handsoap, toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Medications

Personal first aid kit

Your own first aid kit should contain: A basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun-protection, any personal medication, basic pain relief (paracetamol/aspirin/ibuprofen), strepsils, anti-nausea, a personal course of antibiotics if prone to illness etc.

Personal medication

Keep this in your daysack

Miscellaneous

Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Head torch

Bring spare batteries or a spare head torch

Snacks

Although you will be fed well we do advise bringing a small selection of energy bars. Have a couple per trekking day

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

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KIT LIST

Penknife (optional)

Swimsuit

For the odd swim

Trekking poles

These tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Dental check up

We recommend you have a dental check-up before your trip. New fillings can be an issue at altitude if there is an air pocket left in the gap

Travel insurance

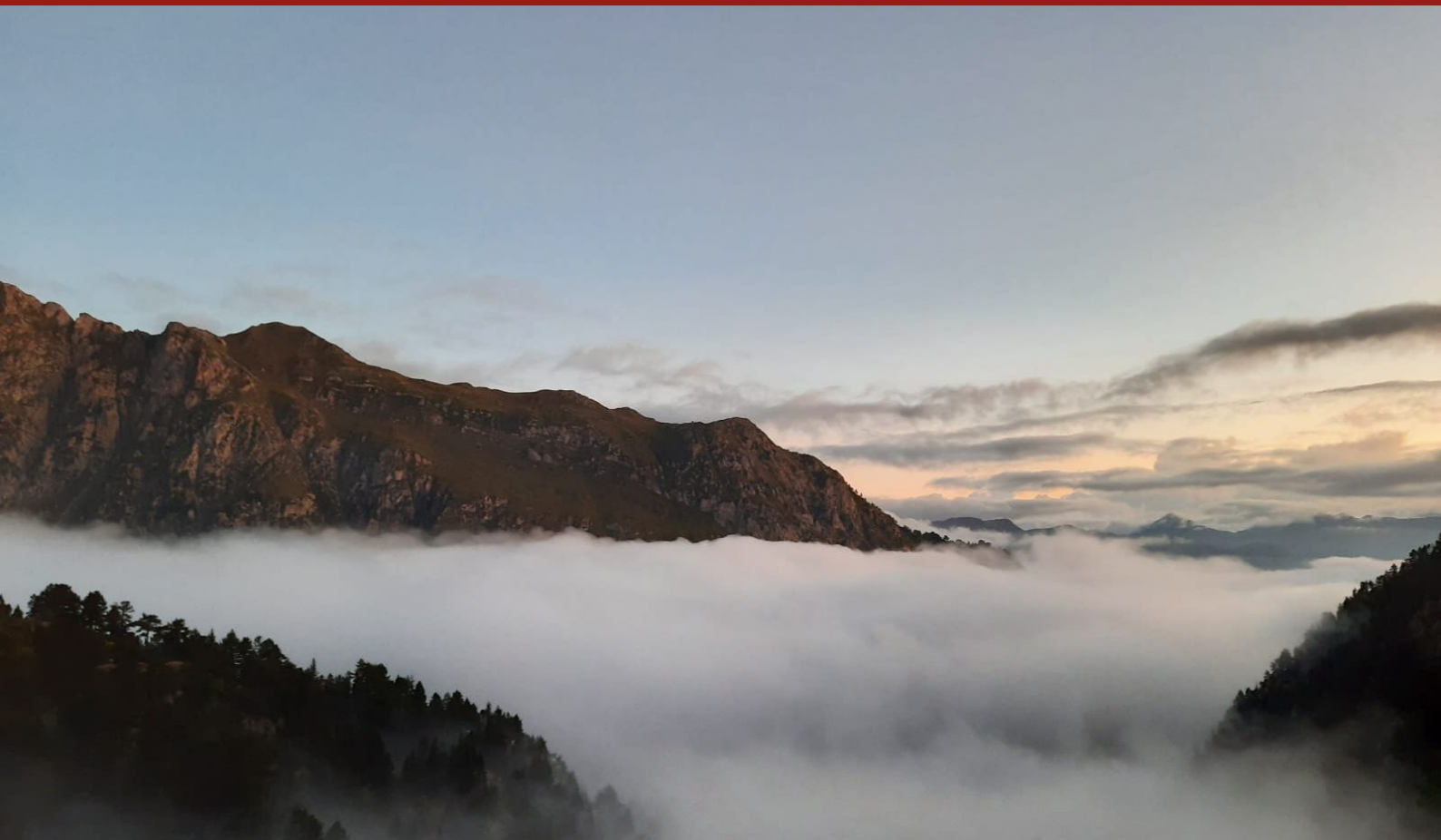
Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

EH1C (formerly E111)

While you do have travel insurance, this can save you paperwork and reduce upfront costs should you have a minor ailment or need to see a local GP if you already have one

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FAQ'S

Food and Water

Where do we get drinking water from?

All drinking water is from the refuge or can be bought at various stops for the first day's walking. We pass streams in various places that you can top up from if you should run out, so take purification to add to it in the form of silver chloride or chlorine.

What is the food like in the refuge?

The food in the refuges is plentiful and of very good quality, often using locally sourced ingredients. Breakfasts consist of pastries, fresh bread and jams and you can expect hearty meals in the evenings.

Do you provide snacks during this expedition? Or do you recommend that we bring our own?

360 provides some snacks for your days on the mountain, however do bring some of your favourite snacks from home, a range of fast and slow release energy snacks. The pure 'energy' style bars which are solid are quite tough to eat on the mountain so go with simple things. Flapjacks, shortbread, sweets, nuts and chocolate are great, snacks that you're going to really look forward to eating and which will give you energy.

Accommodation

What are the refuges like? Is it better than camping?

The refuges are basic, these are inaccessible mountain huts – albeit large. They all have running water, so flush toilets are standard. Most will have hot showers, but on a busy day that hot water will be in high demand and may run out.

Accommodation is in dormitories, so earplugs are recommended if snorers keep you awake. Food will be good with ample carbohydrate content – think pasta, rice, potatoes etc, but don't expect a la carte, food often has to be flown in by helicopter! Given we are all carrying our own kit we don't want to be weighed down by tents and cooking equipment, and as the refuges have beds and washing facilities they are considered the sensible and more comfortable option on these routes.

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FAQ'S

Kit

What? No porters?!? Do I need to carry my own gear?

This summer trek is a hut-supported trek. We love this style of expeditions – slightly less to carry than when we're fully self supported (so there is no need for us to carry tents, fuel stoves etc.), but we still get the freedom of trekking to our own route during the days, and when we arrive at our refuge / hut we will get breakfast, packed lunch and dinner on each day. You will be carrying your own bag, with clothes and toiletries etc. (do check the [kit list](#) or get in touch for more info!) so go careful with your packing – you can always leave additional kit in Luchon prior to the trek start.

So what bag do I need?

A rucksack of around 40–60L should do you just fine. Aim not to carry any more than 10kg. You will be able to leave some kit with the minibus for when you get back off the mountains. If you are borrowing or buying a rucksack, ask someone to help you adjust it to fit your back. And ensure you are making these adjustments with weight inside it, not empty. Generally it should sit reasonably high on your back so that the weight is acting vertically downwards, not forcing your shoulders back or drooping past your backside. Again, it's about how you feel comfortable wearing it and important to get right.

Make sure too that it is either waterproof or you have a waterproof cover for your rucksack. It's not a bad idea to pack your gear into waterproof stuffs sacs, or even bin bags, in case of a deluge.

Do we need any technical gear for this?

No, this is a trek, so standard walking gear outlined in the kit list should suffice. Walking poles are optional.

Do I need a sleeping bag?

All refuges provide blankets but for your comfort and for hygiene reasons we'd recommend bringing a sleeping bag liner (silk or cotton) or a very lightweight sleeping bag. Remember whatever you bring you'll be carrying yourself.

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FAQ'S

The Trek

I've skied in the Alps, I've seen how busy it can get in winter, is summer the same?

Summer in the Pyrenees can be busy within striking distance of the main car parks and operational chairlifts as they attract the local walkers, bikers and day trippers. But once you are a few hours away from these it will feel like you have the whole mountain range to yourself, with occasional people sharing the same path as you. It is a huge area, and most of the time you'll see more wildlife than people. In the evenings the huts can get busy as people tend to centre on them having come from all directions, but the next morning all those people will disappear once more.

What is the terrain like on the Thousand Lakes trek?

Challenging terrain is covered on this trek which require a strong level of fitness and substantial training. The terrain covered will include rocky and uneven path, boulder fields and steep elevation both ascending and descending. We would estimate that around 40% of the route will be over rocky terrain, whilst the remainder exploring stunning trails of varying conditions.

Who is the trek suitable for (fitness wise)?

This trek is achievable for those who have trained sufficiently and the rewards for your efforts are tenfold: a stunning refuge hut deep in the mountains, fuelling on tasty food and witnessing wildlife and majestic mountains in every direction. It is important to remember you are joining a group therefore the group will go at the slowest paced person! It is therefore your responsibility to train and come ready for this trip. It is worth noting we plan to reach each refuge before 1830 in the evening – ideally before 1600 so we have down time before supper at 1930.

Can we swim in the lakes?

They'll be cold, but there's no reason why not!

What if I get there and I am not fit enough or my knees aren't happy?

This is a very rare situation as most will come fit and ready but if this does happen then for the enjoyment of the rest of the team and the safety of the expedition the guide will have to make a call on this as early as within the first hour due to limited escape routes past the first morning on day 1 of the trek.

If you are unsure of your ability and level of training, we provide a training plan when you sign up as inspiration and you can also chat with the team to get a fuller idea of the experience.

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FAQ'S

What happens if I am turned around?

The general plan is that you will be left to rest at the hut that is situated on one of the many stunning lakes. One option is that we see if they have room for a few nights and you rest and chill out at the hut (this will be your responsibility). The other option is that we call in an additional guide to drive over to come up to meet you and walk you out. There will be a cost attached to both options. They will then take you to the town where you will be free for the coming days before you re-meet back up with the group.

What if I get injured or something stops me from carrying on further into the trip?

This will be a different situation and depending where you are the above option will come into play or a use of a helicopter / 4x4 vehicle evac. You are in safe hands so please do not worry.

The Weather

What's the weather like up there?

It's likely to be lovely and sunny, and reasonably warm (pretty hot lower down). However, we're in the mountains, and not very far from the Atlantic, so there is every risk of rain, thunderstorms, and wind. Night time temperatures high up will be decidedly chilly.

The climate of the Pyrenees is generally better than the UK, but there is still the risk of inclement weather, so we advise in the kit list to pack accordingly (see the relevant tab above). And just like any other holiday, having a quick last minute look at the forecast before you come out can be a useful pointer of what's in store.

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FAQ'S

Travel

Flights aren't included what time should I arrive and depart to Toulouse?

We haven't included flights as this gives you options from the UK. There are many flights that come to Toulouse daily from many different airports.

It's important that we check flight schedules before confirming a pickup time with you, as we want to make sure you can actually make it to Toulouse on time. We will confirm what time you should aim to arrive in Toulouse as we draw closer to your departure date.

We will also check flight schedules before deciding what time we do an airport drop off.

Once you know the above, please find flights that work for these timings, or plan to have the night before and/or night after in Toulouse.

If there are any issues with booking your flights, please let us know and we will try and help however it might mean getting a hire car/train or taxi to your start / finish point.

Bagnères de Luchon is 1h 40 mins drive away.

What happens if I miss the pickup time?

We suggest that you get an early flight as possible from the UK to Toulouse so if your flight is delayed this gives you options in being able to get to the starting point of your expedition.

At the point of sign up, 360 will have given you a pickup and drop of time. If you are wildly out of the time slot due to flight delays, 360 will always do what they can to arrange an alternative with you and have on occasions personally done the pick up. Thereafter the options will be to hire a car or jump on a train.

Insurance

Do I need special insurance for this trip?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure.

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FAQ'S

Electronics

Will my mobile work?

On and off, don't rely on it but there could be exposed points where you get a signal, notable higher up. In valleys you'll be hard pushed to get a signal unless they are populated.

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS



"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.