



SKY MIND RETREATS

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Welcome to Sky Mind Retreats! This will be a backpacking trip, and we will carry all our gear in packs on our backs. You do not need to be an Olympic athlete to do this, but you do need to be in good physical condition. What does that mean? We can't give you a training program that will guarantee you'll be in shape for the trip. You must be responsible for your conditioning. But we can give you an idea of what you will be doing on the trip and some general guidelines for getting in shape. If you are already in good shape, keep it up. If not, now is the time to start.

1. WHAT TO EXPECT:

On most days, we hike 2-4 miles--some days less, some days more. Our slickrock routes are on rolling terrain, with lots of ups and downs, with a few steep ascents and descents. On canyon treks, we will be climbing up and down the river banks and crossing the river or stream many times. Packs will weigh 35-40 pounds.

2. SOME PRINCIPLES:

Get inspired, but not intimidated. We don't expect you to devote half of every day to fitness, but starting now on a regular conditioning program will make a huge difference.

Expensive equipment and health club memberships are not required, nor are they as important as your commitment.

Use specificity training where appropriate; the more similar your training is to the future activity, the more benefit you will derive.

If you live in an area with local hills or mountain trails, we strongly suggest that you go on as many hikes as you can. After you're used to the trails, start hiking them with a pack. This will give you a good sense of what to expect on the backpacking trip. If you live in the flat lands, stadium stairs provide great "hills".

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION:

A. Aerobic training for cardiovascular fitness. This is the most important area, as all wilderness travel involves repetitious aerobic activity. Cardiovascular training increases the ability of the body to transport oxygen efficiently to working muscles. Bicycling, hiking, jogging, swimming, and other aerobic workouts will increase cardiovascular fitness.

B. Flexibility. A typical backpacking day involves all types of movement using all the muscle groups. A flexible, loose person will probably move more efficiently, have less residual muscle stiffness, and experience fewer muscle and joint injuries.

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C. Strength and Power. The ability to carry a pack up and down hills and over backcountry terrain requires strength. Strong muscle groups help protect joints from injury. Joining a gym to get a good workout may be appropriate for you; hiking at a good pace on hills and trails, and climbing stairs or trails with a pack on will help. Strengthen back, shoulder, and abdominal muscles also. Remember, start well within your current ability and work up to harder exercise as you gain strength. One of our recent hikers suggests starting to hike with your pack at least six weeks before the trip. Increase the weight of your pack over time.

D. Attitude. This is one of the most important aspects of the trip and of your conditioning program. **Courage, humor, humility, and self-forgiveness** will all be important. There may be times on the backpacking trip when you feel discouraged or tired; expect that as part of every trip. Perhaps the most important resources we bring on the trip are an **eagerness to learn, a willingness to take what nature sends our way, a sense of individual responsibility, and a concern for others.** Having an optimistic attitude will help make the trip succeed for you and your companions.

REMEMBER: You can improve your physical conditioning greatly by starting a steady program now. **Please do not put this off.** It is essential to your safety and enjoyment, and the safety and enjoyment of your companions, that you have the proper physical fitness. If you would describe your conditioning as “moderate,” “fair,” or “average,” you probably need to increase your exercise regime. Yoga, gardening, and walking the dog are all wonderful, but none of them is full preparation for backpacking. An hour with your pack several times a week, plus a longer hike on the weekends, will do you a lot of good.

Call us if you have any questions about this.