



By Kevin Jackson

TRAINING TO CLIMB 14,000-FOOT PEAKS

It's difficult to put into words the feeling of reaching the summit of a 14,000-foot peak, but a common response when asked is, "It is something you have to do." If the urge to climb a mountain has been a goal of yours, it is time to stop reading stories of other people and make the commitment to do it yourself.

Getting to the top of the tallest point in the continental United States, Mt. Whitney at 14,949, is certainly a rewarding challenge but one that should not be underestimated. Scaling mountains above 14,000 feet demand a lot from us — not only physically but also technically, mentally and psychologically. How can we build up to this or even conceive accurately what is needed? It's not easy. Reaching the summit of a 14,000-foot peak is one the hardest things a climber can ever do.

Preparing yourself is a definite precursor to having a great experience on any mountain and significantly reduces your likelihood of injury or altitude sickness. Since each individual has his or her own schedule, physical and mental abilities, goals and determination, training varies. However, prior to any adventure that reaches altitudes of over 8,000 feet, I offer a detailed training program that accompanies this article to assist you in reaching your goals. This program focuses on muscle endurance, core strength,

muscle memory, flexibility and strength training.

Our training program assumes that you have been working out on a regular basis but that you do not have easy access to a nearby mountain of any substantial altitude. Use it as you see fit and modify it for your own purposes. But keep in mind that your ultimate goal is to be as physically prepared as you can possibly be for this adventure.

Objectives of Your Training Program

At the end of your training program you should be able to:

>> Walk and climb up hills at a moderate pace for up to six to eight hours a day.

>> Carry up to 50 pounds of pack weight on your back.

>> Recover from a hard day's climbing within an eight- to 12-hour period.

>> Go the extra mile when called upon for survival reasons — both physically and mentally.

To accomplish this, a good training program focuses its efforts on cardiovascular and motor fitness. This will help build your ability to handle altitude, climb longer, be more comfortable on steeper and awkward terrain, carry heavier loads, recover quicker at rest and have a better overall experience on the mountain.

There are a variety of aerobic exercises that are fantastic for training, including climbing and descending hills, stairs or stadium bleachers and any kind of skiing, snowboarding, running and cycling. Also, I try to include balance and agility training, such as racquetball or tennis (crosstraining exercises).

As far as strength training, I recommend that you limit your lifting to two sets of 20 repetitions with lighter weights. Your first 15 reps ought to go easy; your last five with each set should be tough.

Our 12-week program helps develop both your cardiovascular and motor fitness through specific activities designed to simulate the adventure as closely as possible. The foundation skill in mountain climbing is hiking and therefore will be the focal point of exercise specificity. The program focuses on training the muscles associated with climbing — as well as descending — for long periods of time. I also recommend keeping a training log to track your progress.

Jackson is the owner of TST Adventures, an outdoor travel and training company in San Diego, California. To learn more about the areas they explore or to get involved in one of their many adventure programs, visit www.tstadventures.com or call (858) 309-2311.

5 POPULAR 14,000-Foot Peaks in the U.S.

Mt. Whitney (California)
14,949
www.tstadventures.com

Mt. Rainier (Washington)
14,410
www.rmi.com

Castle Peak (Colorado)
14,265
www.aspenexpeditions.com

Mt. Shasta (California)
14,162
www.rei.com/adventures

Snowmass Mountain (Colorado)
14,092
www.aspenexpeditions.com

In the Mood to CLIMB?

Okay, so we know there's nothing even remotely like Mt. Whitney in the Southeast, but there are still plenty of places you can scale new heights — even in the chilly winter months. Here are some indoor options:

Aiguille Rock Climbing Center
Longwood, Florida
www.aiguille.com

Atlanta Rocks!
Doraville, Georgia
www.atlantarocks.com

Coral Cliffs
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
www.coralcliffs.com

Vertical Ventures Rock Climbing Gym
Tampa, Florida
www.verticalventures.com

X-Treme Rock Climbing
Miami, Florida
www.x-tremerock.com

THE 12-WEEK Program

While the training program below is designed for 12 weeks, I highly recommend starting your fitness training well in advance of your climb and increase the intensity and duration of your exercise sessions as you gain fitness.

	Cardiovascular	Strength	Stretching	Hiking Distance	Pack Weight
Weeks 1-2	2 X Per Week	2 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	5 lbs
	30 min stair climb	Focus 1: Calves, Hamstrings, Quads	10 minutes pre & post	6 Miles	
	30 min elliptical	Focus 2: Abs, Back, arms	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec 1 X Yoga	Elevation Gain 500 Ft.	
Weeks 3-4	3 X Per Week	2 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	10 lbs
	30 min cross train	Focus 1: Calves, Hamstrings, Quads	10 minutes pre & post	8 Miles	
	40 min stair climb	Focus 2: Abs, Shoulders, Chest	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec 1 X Yoga	Elevation Gain 1000 ft.	
Weeks 5-6	3 X Per Week	2 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	10 lbs
	30 min cross train	Focus 1: Calves, Hamstrings, Quads	10 minutes pre & post	10 Miles	
	45 min stair climb	Focus 2: Abs, Back, shoulders	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec 1 X Yoga	Elevation Gain 1500 ft.	
Weeks 7-8	3 X Per Week	2 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	15 lbs
	30 min cross train	Focus 1: Calves, Hamstrings, Quads	10 minutes pre & post	10 Miles	
	45 min stair climb	Focus 2: Abs, Chest, Arms	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec 1 X Yoga	Elevation Gain 2000 ft.	
Weeks 9-10	3 X Per Week	2 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	20 lbs
	40 min cross train	Focus 1: Calves, Hamstrings, Quads	10 minutes pre & post	12 Miles	
	45 min stair climb	Focus 2: Abs, Back, Arms	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec 1 X Yoga	Elevation Gain 2500 ft.	
Weeks 11-12	2 X Per Week	1 x Per Week	2 x / Week with Strength Training	1 x Per Week	20 lbs
	45 min stair climb	Circuit Train	10 minutes pre & post	12 Miles	
	1 X Spin Class	high reps low weight	Hold each stretch for 30-60 sec	Elevation Gain	