

A simple training plan

For some of you preparing for a bikepacking event is a bit new. **3000kms** is a long way, but the more prepared you are, the more fun it will be.

There is a saying that goes "any plan is better than no plan".

I have done a bit of training, and coaching over the years so I am happy to share my very basic plan. It's a safe plan with lots of recovery. If you are a harry-hard-out and are a lot younger, you can do a lot more and don't really need me to tell you how to suck eggs. This is a plan for people with limited time.

For this time of the year, when the weather is rubbish, in Wellington anyway, you need to start small.

Because I am an old bugger I believe in lots of rest. A recent study has suggested what I always suspected. The best recovery is actually not riding. Your partner will probably buy into this concept too.



Jonty and Chris Kiwi Brevet 2010. Molesworth.

Phase 1 Starting week.

M

T - 1 hour

W

T - 1 hour
F
S - 3 hours
S

Can you see the pattern? Hard, easy, hard, easy, hard, easy. There is no improvement without recovery.

All of these rides can be on the flat, until your fitness improves. Then as your confidence increases you can head for the hills. As Arthur Lydiard used to say "Hills are the short-cut to speed". You won't need speed, but the strength will help heaps.

As the weeks go on you will notice that 1 hour is a doddle, and there is a lot more light available in the day. This is when you get out of bed earlier. Getting out of bed earlier is a skill that you can apply to other areas of your life. Just don't wake the family.

The 1 hour rides morph into 2 hour rides and the 3 hour ride becomes a 5 hour ride. Gradually....



Nick and Jonty Kiwi Brevet 2010. Maruia.

Phase 2 (A month later).

M

T - 2 hour

W

T - 2 hour

F

S - 5 hours

S

You need to ramp up the hours slowly, because as you age, your testosterone levels drop off and recovery is harder. (I have noticed a lot of Bikepackers are over 40.)

If you get tired, you will become grumpy, and your family might ask you to move out into your own flat.

So before long you are doing $2+2+5=9$ hours a week. 5 hours is a very good ride. 7 hours kinda feels like a days work, but if you go somewhere new to explore and you are not just riding around in circles then its all good. If you don't have typical family demands then you might be able to sneak out for some longer adventures.

A couple of times you might like to get up REALLY early and do a $3+2+5 = 10$ hour week.

Then, if you are still married, and you encourage your spouse to head away for a trip with their best friend one weekend you can try doubling up. That means back to back rides, like you will do in the TA.

If you still have any friends at this point they will likely be cyclists so you can even do an over-nighter and test some of that fruity gear you have been purchasing all year.

So you might end up doing a $3+2+5+5=15$ hour week . I don't think I have ever ridden that many hours (training) in a week but if you are motivated and get a clean leave pass anything is possible.



Matt Jonty and Alex Kiwi Brevet 2012. Moana.

Phase 3 (3 months later).

M
T - 3 hour
W
T - 2 hour
F
S - 5 hours
S- 5 hours

Every 4th week, have an easy week. Cut right back on your work-load. You could knock back your hours by 40% and do your rides very easily on the flat. Maybe do them with your kids or partner.

You do not need to do any racing to do a bikepacking event, unless you really fancy yourself at the pointy end. Even then its not essential. It wont do you any harm, but if you do decide to do some racing, ride to the event, race, and ride home.

Group rides can also be good for motivation, especially the ones before work where you might struggle with the early morning starts. Riding before work is good because no one can tell about the strange double-life you are leading.

You don't need to ride a loaded bike all the time but its a good idea to do some loaded riding towards the end of your training so its not a shock to your system.

I am currently doing my long ride on a Friday night (leaving work early) while my wife goes to the pub with her buddies. It gives me a chance to test my lights and I have a whole weekend to recover and do useful stuff around the house.

Don't stress about kilometres. Its time in the saddle you need to experience. Sort out your nutrition and how you will carry your liquids, spares, tools etc.

Even though you could well end up riding 10 hours a day in the **TA**, its not as hard as you might think. You will have lots of breaks, and it feels more like you are riding two 5 hour days with total recovery in between. You will be surprised how easy it is without the day to day stresses of working for a living and training at the same time.

Some maxims

- If in doubt, leave it out.
- Don't do your easy rides too hard and your hard rides too easy.
- You can recover from being under-trained, but its a lot harder to recover from being over-trained.

To summarise. Build up slowly. Hard/easy. Test your gear, most importantly your saddle.

One last thing. Your **comfort** on the bike is in my view more important than your fitness. Make sure your bars are not too low, or too stretched out. Also, make sure you have multiple hand positions on your bars. You need to be able to mix it up, or you **WILL** get hand numbness, and being fit wont help at all. **Do some research on this.** Bar ends, drop bars and aero bars can all help.

It will be the best holiday you ever had!
Does that sound mad?

Disclaimer. If you are young and reckless and have youth on your side, you don't need to do any of this. Just eat lots of Kebabs ;)



Steve Halligan 2014 Kiwi Brevet. Rainbow Valley.

A link from bikepacking.net on [training for the Tour Divide](#). You will find many useful resources here.