

Suggested Physical Training for Hiking at Elevation (Keeping in Mind the Near Sea-Level Resident Who Plans to Hike Mt. Harvard)

Some people are intrinsically fit and will need no further preparation for this hike beyond what they may (or may not) already do. Most of us, however, cannot hike Mt. Harvard 'cold', especially if you do not live at altitude. This said, the required level of physical training is not that great.

There are two primary issues and one secondary issue you likely will encounter with respect to this hike:

- 1) Cardiovascular function (primary)
- 2) Leg strength (primary)
- 3) Arm and upper body strength (secondary)

Cardiovascular Function (a primary need):

Like a long-distance run, this hike is a big, sustained cardio workout. For those coming from near sea-level, the difficulty of this task is of course increased by virtue of the smaller amount of oxygen available to you in each breath (compared to what you could acquire breathing at the same rate at sea-level, see 'Altitude Adjustment' in **Suggestions for Hiking at Elevation, With Special Attention to Equipment and Supplies (Keeping in Mind the Near Sea-Level Resident Who Plans to Hike 14ers, Notably Mt. Harvard)**).

Objective:

Endurance is the main objective here, not speed, so what you should attempt to do is to increase your ability to do sustained, aerobic exercise – hours of it. We are allocating a full day (about 12 hours, including breaks) to this event and, while most will complete the hike much faster than this, all participants need to be able to do sustained exercise of moderate difficulty for many successive hours.

Suggestions:

Anyone who has prepared for a marathon (which is a much more demanding event than is this hike) will find the following suggestions familiar:

Devise a routine that you can (and will) do and that includes any activity that gets your heart pumping (suggested activities follow). Do your routine(s) two to four times weekly, with intervening days 'off' to let your body recover / any soreness abate. Start for modest durations (perhaps as little as 20 minutes) and, over the course of several weeks, work the durations of your workouts up to a several hours, approaching 10 hours toward the end. Within two weeks of the hike, taper-down your times gradually to an hour or less. Always stretch well - especially your legs - before you begin and after you complete your routine(s).

Possible activities might include:

- Hiking (imagine that)
- Running
- Walking
- Climbing stairs
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Swimming
- Treadmill (walked, run, or some combination of these)
- Stair-Master
- Stationary bicycle
- Elliptical machine
- Rowing machine (ergometer)

Again, do your physical training consistently – and honestly.

Leg Strength (a primary need):

Again, like a long-distance run, this hike will work your legs extensively – especially your quadriceps, but also your calves and shins. Your legs must be able to carry you, your daypack, its contents, your boots, etc. (Your devised workouts should sometimes include this additional weight, likely around 10-20 pounds [5-10 kilograms].) Each of the suggested activities listed above (except rowing, swimming, and the ergometer) can accommodate wearing weights or a weighted pack or vest.

Please recall: you have a full 14 mile [~22.5 kilometer] round-trip route, and it includes a 4,500+ feet [~1,400 meters] elevation change. Upon completion, however, you will have summited the third highest peak in Colorado (after Mounts Elbert and Massive), the fourth highest in the Lower 48 (Mount Whitney in California being the highest), and the 16th tallest in the US (12 Alaskan peaks are taller).

Arm and Upper Body Strength (a secondary need):

If, as recommended, you use one or two hiking poles (and do so correctly), you will be giving your chest, upper back, and especially your arms, a significant work out. While you can hike without poles, you will be thankful for them if you use them.

Possible activities might include:

- Pushups
- Pullups
- Upper-body weight work (light weights would be fine)

Do these either in conjunction with your cardio and leg workout, or on alternate days – as you prefer.

PSK