

## Acclimatization Tips

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The majority of Sierra Mountain Center's programs take place in high-altitude environments. It's crucial to recognize that the effects of Acute Mountain Sickness and more severe altitude-related illnesses can not only curtail your expedition swiftly but also pose life-threatening risks. Your guide is trained to promptly identify signs and symptoms associated with altitude sickness. Should you not experience improvement, a swift descent to lower altitudes will be executed.

Taking the time to acclimatize properly prior to embarking on your trip is a proactive measure that can significantly enhance your experience and safety. In the days leading up to your trip, incorporate small hikes at low intensity from higher elevation trailheads. Going for a hike to, and above, 10,000 feet will help your body begin to respond to the decreased oxygen supply. Then you can allow your body to recover from that slight strain by resting low. Many hikers and climbers have had great success with this technique for a very long time, which is where the phrase "climb high, sleep low" comes from.

If you know you sleep well at elevation, we suggest spending at least one night at a moderate altitude, higher than 8,000 feet, just prior to the start of the journey.

- Cottonwood Lakes Walk-in Campground (10,000 feet)
- Mammoth Lakes Basin Campgrounds (9,000 feet)
- Bishop Creek Campgrounds (9,000 feet)
- Mosquito Flat Campground (9,000 feet)

While sleeping at high elevation is helpful, many people do not sleep well at elevation. If you know this is you or if you're uncertain about how well you'll sleep, it's advisable not to plan on spending the night at one of the high-elevation campgrounds for acclimatization the night before your trip. Prioritize your rest by choosing the most comfortable sleeping arrangements, even if it means staying at a slightly lower elevation hotel room in Mammoth Lakes (7,800 feet). Arriving at your mountain adventure well-rested is paramount. It equips your body to handle the physical exertion and altitude-related stress more effectively.

Proper hydration is a vital component of feeling your best at high altitudes. This entails being well-hydrated before embarking on your trip and maintaining that hydration throughout your journey. It doesn't mean guzzling a gallon of water just before bedtime and spending the night in the restroom! Instead, consider gradually increasing your water intake while incorporating electrolyte supplements into your routine several days before your trip. Once at altitude, continue to increase your water intake slightly, still complemented by electrolytes. Without these essential minerals, increased water consumption alone may have adverse effects. Numerous brands of electrolytes are available, some of which can enhance the taste of your water, and others are conveniently in capsule form. Meticulous attention to your hydration will yield significant improvements in your energy levels and recovery throughout your adventure.

## Fitness and Training Tips

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Travel in the mountains is demanding. These adventures may very well be some of the most physically demanding endeavors of your life. There is little time for recovery and endurance is one of the tools for success. Cardiovascular fitness and motor proficiency form the bedrock upon which the specific strengths necessary to achieve your climbing, mountaineering, skiing, and hiking aspirations are built. In the face of extended days and unforeseen challenges, mental resilience and adaptability become invaluable assets. By dedicating effort beforehand, you can position yourself for triumph on your upcoming mountain



adventure. We strongly encourage you to embrace a structured training regimen prior to embarking on your significant mountain expedition. The following is a fundamental overview of our recommended steps to ensure you make the most of your experience with SMC.

Thoroughly review the trip itinerary and details specific to your trip. This will help you figure out which aspects of fitness you need to focus on to be strong and ready for the trip. The trip packet will contain details about:

- the length (in days) of the trip
- the elevation range at which the trip takes place
- what kind of terrain you will be traveling in
- the conditions you may encounter
- the expected number of miles you will travel
- the elevation gain/loss during an average day
- what kind of weight you can expect to carry in your pack

Next, take a candid look at your current physical fitness level and craft a customized plan. Our guides' training encompasses diverse terrains, including rock, ice, snow, and trails, and extends to activities like biking, road running, and gym workouts. The beauty is that you don't have to reside in the mountains to train effectively for mountain pursuits. Much can be accomplished in urban and flatland settings, preparing you comprehensively for your mountain adventures.

Now; we are not physical trainers, we are guides, but we can offer some suggestions on developing a training program to build up your base fitness, improve your endurance and develop activity specific strength.

### **Cardiovascular Fitness**

Enhance your cardiovascular fitness with aerobic exercises such as hiking, running, cycling, and cross-country skiing. Gradually increase the duration of these activities over your training period. Try incorporating interval training to adapt to different hiking and climbing paces dictated by terrain and conditions. Building cardiovascular fitness not only aids in acclimatizing to high altitudes but also proves beneficial for enduring lengthy approaches to climbs and navigating the Sierra's high mountain passes.

### **Motor-Performance Fitness**

Motor-performance fitness encompasses physical attributes like strength, power, balance, agility, and flexibility. You can cultivate these qualities through a diverse range of activities, whether at the gym or within the comfort of your home. Explore options like weight training for strength and power, along with yoga or dedicated stretching routines to enhance your flexibility and balance.

### **Activity Specific Training**

Tailoring your training to match the specific activities you'll undertake allows your body to acclimate to the actual demands you'll encounter in the field. Hiking with a fully loaded backpack serves as excellent preparation for extended backpacking excursions. Joining a climbing trip? Consider honing your climbing skills at the gym to smoothen the transition to outdoor rock climbing.

### **Professional Training Advice**

It is wise to seek professional training guidance. If you plan to work with a physical trainer at your local gym, be sure to provide them with insights into the specific details of your trip, especially if they are not well-versed in climbing, backpacking, skiing, or other mountain activities. This ensures that your training regimen aligns with the unique demands of your upcoming adventure.

Online training programs for mountain athletes, such as Vertical Ascents, offer convenience and flexibility, allowing you to elevate your fitness and skills from the comfort of your home. With expert guidance and



tailored workouts, you can prepare effectively for your next mountain adventure, whether it's climbing, hiking, or skiing.

## Resources

There are many online resources, books and training programs readily available. We recommend two books to start out with:

**Fit By Nature:** A 12 week outdoor fitness training program by AdventX. Written by: John Colver and M. Nicole Nazarro

**Training for the New Alpinism: A Manual for Climber as Athlete:** This new book is an excellent reference for training specifically for mountain pursuits. It is authored by a world class alpinist, Steve House, and a world cup nordic skiing coach, Scott Johnston. Here, training practices from other endurance sports are broken down and related to mountaineering. This book is catered more to high end alpinism/mountain athletes, but has useful information for any aspiring mountaineer. The training material is augmented with inspiring essays by other top mountain athletes.

**Questions? Contact us!**  
**(760) 873-8526**  
**office@sierramountaincenter.com**

