



# Training Guide

## Mahale Mountains 2023

### **FARM AFRICA**

*"On a long journey,  
even a straw weighs heavy."*

**Spanish Proverb**

## INTRODUCTION

Below you will find a basic training program to make sure you are ready for September. Please remember, neither Åke or myself are qualified PT Instructors and these exercises are very generic. The key here is really is to be fit for purpose and to have endurance. By fit for purpose, I simply mean train for a walking trip by walking. It sounds obvious but being able to cycle 30 miles with ease, does not mean you can walk 20km. Being able to play a full game of 7's rugby with a bunch of 18 year olds and not break a sweat, again (unfortunately!), does not mean walking 20km a couple of days in a row will be easy.

### So what is our end state?

To walk 80km in 6 days over challenging terrain with a back pack of 10kg.

Remember this is your goal and everything should work towards this aim. You don't need to be ultra fit triathletes but we do need to build our endurance so that we can cover ground day after day and not be worn out after day one.

### How do we achieve this?

Training for strenuous hiking involves a combination of cardio and strength exercises. The following is a 3 month training program to prepare for hiking up to 20km per day:

#### **JUNE** (This is your baseline)

**Cardio:** Begin with 20-30 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio (e.g., jogging, cycling, elliptical) 3-4 times a week. Gradually increase the duration and intensity of your cardio workouts.

**Strength:** Incorporate strength training exercises such as squats, lunges, deadlifts, and calf raises 2-3 times a week. Aim for 3 sets of 10-12 repetitions for each exercise.

#### **JULY** (This stage is increasing your fitness)

**Cardio:** Increase your cardio duration to 45-60 minutes and aim to do it 4-5 times a week. Add hill sprints, stair climbing or other incline work to your routine.

**Strength:** Continue with your strength training exercises but increase the weight you lift. Aim for 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions for each exercise.

**AUGUST** (This is the level you want to be at until you leave for Tanzania)

**Cardio:** Increase your cardio duration to 60-90 minutes and aim to do it 5-6 times a week. Incorporate long hikes on trails or steep inclines, with a pack weighing 10-15 kg.

**Strength:** Continue with your strength training exercises but focus on explosive power movements such as box jumps, step ups, and plyometric lunges.

**OTHER TIPS**

- Don't forget to stretch before and after every workout. Focus on stretching your hips, hamstrings, and calves.
- Increase your water and protein intake to aid in muscle recovery.
- Wear hiking boots or shoes to get used to them and avoid blisters.
- Gradually increase your pack weight as you progress through your training program.
- Rest and recover properly, and listen to your body if it needs extra time to recover between workouts.
- Remember that everyone's fitness level and abilities are different, so listen to your body and adjust the program as needed. Always consult with a medical professional before starting any new exercise routine.

**FOOTWEAR**

*"When you have worn out your shoes, the strength of the shoe leather has passed into the fibre of your body. I measure your health by the number of shoes and hats and clothes you have worn out. He is the richest man who pays the largest debt to his shoemaker."*

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Footwear is, without a doubt, the most personal and important choice when it comes to trekking. Your jacket; a bit loose or a bit tight, for the most part it will still do its job. Your shoes however, too small and they could steal your toenails; too big and they will cause you irritating blisters. The British Army call their boots their land rovers - they are the most important piece of kit in one's outdoor arsenal and should not be sniffed at. So how do we choose the right shoes? Especially with the hundreds of different options available staring blankly back at you from the shelves. It can be a daunting experience

even for the mountain savvy but after reading this section on choosing your footwear, hopefully you will be better armed when entering that mountain footwear arena.

## **GENERAL ADVICE**

Go to a reputable adventure shop who knows what they are talking about when it comes to footwear.

Tell the shop attendant where you plan to use your boots and ask for his advice.

Your boots should have ankle support. Mountains are an extremely easy place to roll or even break an ankle. Not something you want to do on day 1 after travelling so far to conquer a mountain only to be defeated at the first hurdle; especially when it could have been so easily avoided.

Don't rush buy your boots. Your boots are a big investment, if you don't feel completely happy with them then try a different pair.

## **YOUR FEET**

Your feet are unique to you for a number of reasons and therefore a notoriously difficult subject to advise on. Depending on the type of arch you have, the length of your toes, the width of your foot and even the past injuries you have sustained all have a huge bearing when walking.

The gold standard of advice on all matters to do with feet would obviously come from a podiatrist and if you are serious about hiking we would strongly suggest an appointment with one as your feet can easily affect the rest of your body if not looked after correctly.

It is worth mentioning that different makes of shoes will fit different types of feet better. For example, one make will suit a wider foot whereas another will suit a thinner foot more.

## **SIZE**

Over the course of a long hike your feet WILL swell. This is especially true when hiking in hot conditions. Shoes that feel nice and snug in the store, will most probably feel tight and uncomfortable after a few long days on the trail.

Many sales people will recommend a gap of one finger between your heel and the back of the shoe. This is a personal preference but you can go up to 2 fingers even. It is easier to wear another thin pair of socks until your feet swell than to have boots that are too tight. Tight boots also cause your toes to hit the front of the boots during the descent, which after time can lead to losing a toenail or 2!

If possible, try the shoes on with the same socks you will be wearing on the hike. Before purchasing, walk up and down stairs, run around the store and wiggle your toes vigorously. If there is any tightness whatsoever, the shoes are too small. Most decent stores will have an area where you can simulate walking up and down hills. Some stores will also let you take the shoes home and walk around inside as much as you want to make sure the fit is correct, which is worth considering.

Remember, your feet WILL swell.

### **BREAK THEM IN!**

No matter what your choice in footwear, go for at least a few hikes before embarking on a multi-day trek. Your feet will need time to adapt. This especially holds true if you purchase boots, which may require weeks of regular wear before they feel completely comfortable. Blisters are much easier to deal with new boots after a single day's trekking. Blisters on the mountain, when you have another 4 days to hike can be much more bothersome!