

Fitness and Training

The guides at Sierra Mountain Center take fitness and training seriously. Being in top shape allows them to perform at a high level and enjoy their time in the mountains. Mountain athletes need to focus on endurance to be successful on their adventures. Our trips last days and weeks on end, and the mountains can get the most of you if you're not prepared. By eating well and focusing on goal oriented training, our guides can perform at a high level for an extended period and avoid injury.

Remember that a majority of the programs offered by Sierra Mountain Center take place at high elevation environments. The effects of Acute Mountain Sickness and more serious altitude related illness can bring your trip to an end quickly and worse, can be life threatening. Your guide is trained to identify signs and symptoms related to altitude sickness early on and will descend to lower elevations quickly if you do not improve. It takes time to acclimatize to altitude and it is up to you to spend time at 8000' or above before your trip to speed that process. Failure to do so may result in an early retreat from the mountains. Being in good shape can help but not always. Protect your investment in training and the trip by trying to acclimatize ahead of time.

Cardiovascular fitness and motor fitness provide the foundation for the specific strengths needed to meet your climbing, mountaineering, skiing and hiking goals. Mental fortitude and a flexible attitude can only help when the days get long and unexpected events arise.

You too can set yourself up for success on your next trip into the mountains by putting in some work ahead of time. We recommend committing to a training program before embarking on your next big trip in the mountains. What follows is a basic introduction to some of our recommendations for preparing to make the most of your experience with SMC.

First, familiarize yourself with the provided trip itinerary and information. The specific information about the trip will help you to identify what areas of fitness you need to work on to be strong and prepared for. The trip packet will include information about:

- the length (in days) of the trip,
- the elevation range at which the trip takes place,
- what kind of terrain you will be travelling 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, with this information you need to make an honest assessment of what your current level of physical fitness is. Then you should develop a plan. Remember, 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.

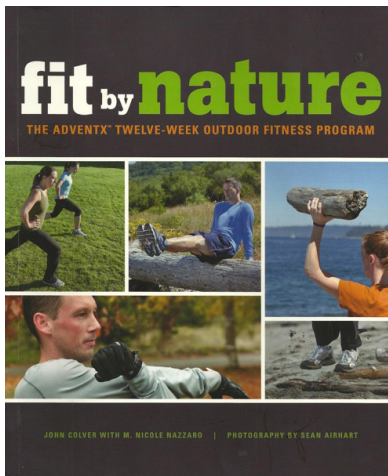
We train on rock, ice, snow and trail; but also put time in on bikes, pavement and in the gym to prepare for our personal and professional activities. You don't necessarily need to live in the mountains to train for the mountains. You can do much in the inner-city and on the flatlands to prepare. Now; we are not physical trainers, we are guides, but we can offer some suggestions on getting started with training:

1. Identify your current cardiovascular and motor fitness strengths and weaknesses.
2. Figure out how long you have to prepare for your upcoming mountain trip.
3. Get serious. Develop a training plan and stick to it.

Your training program should build up your base fitness, improve your endurance and develop activity specific strength.

- Improve your cardiovascular fitness through aerobic activities such as running, cycling and cross-country skiing. Build your aerobic fitness over time, increasing the time spent on these activities throughout your training period. Consider interval training so that you can adapt to hiking/climbing at a variety of paces as terrain and conditions dictate. Cardiovascular fitness will help you to acclimatize to high altitude environments and will help with those long approaches to climbs and the high passes of the Sierra.
- Improve your motor fitness strengths. Motor fitness refers to physical strength, power, balance, agility and flexibility. This can be achieved through a variety of activities in the gym and at home. Consider a weight training program and push-ups/sit-ups for strength; yoga or dedicated stretching for flexibility and balance; and trail running for agility.
- Activity specific training will help your body to adapt to the demands you will place on it in the real environment. Going to the climbing gym and practicing your movement skills will make the transition to the rock easier. Lift served skiing will break your legs in for travel on snow before a big ski tour. Hiking with a full backpack will help prepare you for an extended backpacking trip.
- Slowly build up the duration and intensity of your workouts to build endurance over time.

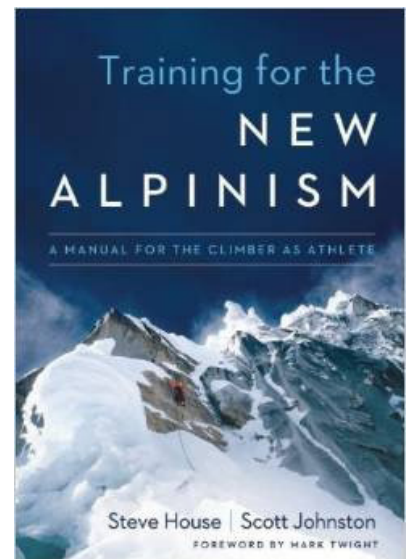
Seeking out professional training advice is a good idea. If you are going to use a physical trainer at your local gym, tell them about what your trip entails in case they are not familiar with climbing, backpacking, skiing and other mountain activities. There are many online resources, books and training 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 is 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.



Mountain Athlete offers many training programs for a fee. They are laid out nicely with a schedule, and all of the exercises are archived on their website for instructional purposes. Some programs are available through a weekly subscription service. The programs are designed with climbing and mountain pursuits in mind.

<http://strongswiftdurable.com/mountain-athlete/>