



Training Plan

Pilgrims Way Challenge



Get hiking fit with our six and seven week training plans

Pilgrims Way Challenge Training Plan

Thank you for joining the Pilgrims Way Challenge and supporting Pilgrims Hospices. Your aim is to complete one of three distances (25km, 35km or 55km) between the picturesque village of Wye, Canterbury and the historic Dover Castle. So let's get ready to hike for the hospice!

These 6 and 7 week training plans are designed to build your fitness, strength and stamina in time for the challenge so you can cover your chosen distance successfully and comfortably.

When beginning your training, you should already be able to walk at least 3km (2 miles) in one go. Each plan begins on 25th April and the distances build up week by week. The idea of these plans is that regular hikes, in a combination of shorter and longer distances, will strengthen your leg muscles and, most importantly, prepare your feet for sustained walking.

The plans incorporate longer walks at weekends, when you will hopefully have more time, and opportunity, to cover the longer distances. During the week there's a couple of shorter distances where you can mix things up. Pick up your pace, find new routes and test out different kit.

The plans also include back-to-back training walks, especially at weekends to replicate hiking on tired leg muscles. There are plenty of rest days in between as well as lots of stretching! As your distances increase, stretching is a must - to help improve your recovery after long walks and to aid flexibility and muscle strengthening.

In the last 2 weeks of the plans your mileage decreases to allow your body to rest, recover and to be at optimum fitness for the big day!

Km or Miles (it's your preference)

The Pilgrims Way Challenge is mapped in km; either 25, 35 or 55km. In miles this equates to 15.5, 21.7 or 34 miles respectively. This document lists distances in both units to help you plan your training routes.

Making it work for you

We can offer you all the best advice and put a training plan into place but if it doesn't fit with your day-to-day life - then mix it up! Some people work weekends, our hospice nurses work nights and shift patterns, so you must make it work for you. For your shorter hikes during the week... could you walk to work? Or go out for a hike on your lunch break and cover 3 miles (it's possible in an hour).

You will also need to consider your current fitness... if you are a weekend Rambler, then you may be able to achieve the longer hikes more quickly. If you do other sports such as running or cycling, you may have a higher base level of fitness. But remember, nothing quite replicates long hikes and how your legs will feel, not to mention testing out your footwear. We've seen it many times when a runner will wear running trainers but they don't always lend themselves to walking; and that's when blisters and sore spots can appear...

Make sure you test out your equipment

Backpacks, walking trousers or leggings and of course waterproofs, as well as footwear. The Great British weather can always surprise us and although the event take place in June to increase the chance of sunshine; sometimes the heavens will open and you need to be prepared for all weathers! Rain or shine! You don't want waterlogged footwear to be another challenge to overcome on the 11th June. Take a look at our Clothing and Equipment List. Those doing the 35km and 55km challenge, you must bring a head torch with you for the evening stages.

Being mentally and physically prepared

As with any challenge that requires a high level of endurance, whatever your fitness levels or previous experience this can be a testing event (especially in the later stages for those doing the 55km distance). Make sure you train so that you can put yourself in the very best place you can be for the challenge. Eat and rest well and be mentally prepared for the task ahead. Enjoy your time out walking. Use the hikes to plan your week ahead, plan your food shopping, or just enjoy the peace and scenery surrounding you. You can even encourage your friends and family to share some of the km/miles with you to catch up while do something healthy at the same time.





The 25km Challenge (6-Week Training Plan)

From the picturesque village of Wye near Ashford, pass through rolling farmland before a challenging climbing up onto the Soakham Downs. From here, the next few miles are dominated by King’s Wood, where pilgrims banded together as protection against robbers.

Then, a long gradual descent takes you past ancient, timber-framed houses into the pretty hilltop village of Chilham. A short climb to the intriguingly named Old Wives Lees is followed by pushing through extensive orchards and a nature reserve before enjoying views of Canterbury’s magnificent Cathedral upon reaching the finish line.

Did you know?

The total distance hiked at the Pilgrims Way Challenge 2021 was **24,480 kilometres**. That’s the equivalent of walking between Lands End and John o’Groats over 18 times!

25km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 24 April	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	8km/5 miles
Week 2 W/C 1 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	9.6km/6 miles	3.2km/2 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 8 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 15 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you’re feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	14.4km/9 miles – mileage increasing	3.2km/2 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 22 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	17.7km/11 miles - mix up your pace	4.8km/3 miles
Week 6 W/C 29 May	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Plan your diet for next week, start carb loading and increase it 2/3 days before the challenge	20.9km/13 miles – the big one before your challenge!	4.8km/3 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!

The 35km Challenge (6-Week Training Plan)

The route leads through the historic heart of Canterbury and out into vast fields, passing the farming villages of Hode, Patrixbourne and Womenswold, with a view of the magnificent Georgian mansion at Higham Park before a steady ascent towards Shepherdswell.

Soon after, you pass the grand Waldershare House and its impressive mews before following the path of an old Roman road that ran between Richborough and Dover. Finally, descend towards Dover as you catch your first glimpse of the sea before a final testing climb to the finish line inside the impressive inner bailey of Dover Castle.

35km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 24 April	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	8km/5 miles	9.6km/6 miles
Week 2 W/C 1 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	8km/5 miles	8km/5 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 8 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 15 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you're feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	24km/15 miles – a more than a half marathon distance	6.4km/4 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 22 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	14.4km/9 miles – mileage increasing	4.8km/4 miles
Week 6 W/C 29 May	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Plan your diet for next week, start carb loading and increase it 2/3 days before the challenge.	23.3km/14.5 miles – the big one before your big challenge.	4.8km/4 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!

Did you know?

The Pilgrims Way Challenge is just a section of the much longer North Downs Way National Trail, which runs 246km from Farnham, Surrey all the way to the White Cliffs of Dover!

The 55km Challenge (7-Week Training Plan)

Take on the ultimate test of endurance and enjoy both sections of the Pilgrims Way described on the previous pages! After leaving Wye village in the morning and experiencing all the natural beauty east Kent has to offer throughout the day, arriving at Dover Castle, your final destination, will be a welcome sight and a sense of achievement that you'll remember for years to come.

55km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 24 April	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	8km/5 miles	9.6km/6 miles
Week 2 W/C 1 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles	8km/5 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 8 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	17.7km/11 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 15 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you're feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	27km/17 miles – more than a half marathon distance and the first of your big 3 hikes!	6.4km/4 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 22 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	6.4km/4 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	37km/23 miles – the really big one before your challenge!	4.8km/4 miles
Week 6 W/C 29 May	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	6.4km/4 miles	Stretch	23.3km/14.5 miles – your distances are reduced so that you're well rested for 11 th June.	4.8km/4 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!
Week 7 W/C 5 June	Plan your diet for this week, carb loading begins!	8km/5 miles to keep your legs strong and ready to hike!	Rest – carbs, carbs, carbs!	Rest – eat well!	Rest, prepare & pack your bags for the big challenge!	The Pilgrims Way Challenge 55km/34 miles!	Recovery!

Did you know?

80% of our funding comes from the amazing generosity of our local community through donations, our shops and fundraising events such as the Pilgrims Way Challenge.