



Training Plan

Folkestone Downs Challenge

Get hiking fit with our six week training plan

Folkestone Downs Challenge Training Plan

Thank you for joining the Folkestone Downs Challenge and supporting Pilgrims Hospices. Your aim is to complete the 36km route encompasses the beautiful and varied landscape of the south Kent coast. So let's get ready to hike for the hospice!

This six week training plan is designed to build your fitness, strength and stamina in time for the challenge so you can cover the distance successfully and comfortably.

When beginning your training, you should already be able to walk at least 3km (2 miles) in one go. The plan begins on 15th July and the distances build up week by week. The idea of this plan 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 plan 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 plan also includes 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 plan 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 Folkestone Downs Challenge is 36 kilometres. In miles this equates to 22.5 miles. 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 31st August. Take a look at our Clothing and Equipment List.

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. 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 36km Challenge (6-Week Training Plan)

The route leads begins at the Folkestone Harbour Arm and climbs to the height of Kent's famous white cliffs within the first few kilometres where you'll enjoy breathtaking views over the English Channel, Folkestone and Romney Marsh beyond as you follow the chalk ridgeline westward.

Along the way, you'll pass Castle Hill, the site of an early Norman fortification, as well as the Folkestone White Horse, before reaching one of the highest points of the North Downs at Tolsford Hill (181m). From there, your trail descends through fields and woodland to the picturesque Lympne Castle, with a chance of glimpsing some exotic animals as you pass by Port Lympne Safari Park. Then, you'll join the scenic pathways of the Royal Military Canal through Hythe and Sandgate on your return to Folkestone's historic harbour.

36km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 15 July	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	8km/5 miles	9.6km/6 miles
Week 2 W/C 22 July	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 29 July	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 5 August	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 12 August	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 19 August	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?

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