

Preparing For Your Backpack Hunt – A Physical Fitness Program

Morning Mountain Workouts

My workout program typically starts in January and is completed by August 1st. My morning workouts consist of hiking the mountain fondly nicknamed “Jeep Hill” near my home in Cedar City, Utah.

Since I try to be at work by 9 am, as the year progresses and daylight comes earlier each month, I lengthen my workout accordingly.

Some years I climb Jeep Hill on Mondays and Tuesdays, run for 1 hour on Wednesdays, and climb the mountain again on Thursday and Friday, taking Saturday and Sunday off. My goal is to hike it at least 4 days a week, so if I have workout interference during the weekdays I will try to go on Saturday.

The last few years I have started adding weight to my pack for the hike up, increasing the weight as the year progresses. I also have gone to using a walking stick, as much of the terrain I cover is steep and covered with loose rock.

I am fortunate to live at about 5,500' elevation and have Jeep Hill 7 minutes from my home. For those not so lucky, I suggest using a stair climber for your morning workout.

In the last few years, to better maintain upper body strength, I have resolved myself to going to the gym in the afternoons for an hour workout. This will help build body strength, especially upper body strength. (Workout schedule included)

January through February – I consider these 2 months as “warm-up” months. Allowing you to get used to a scheduled workout and your body to recognize it is getting ready for greatness. I suggest a 1/2 hour to 45 minute workout. Improve your diet if weight loss is also a goal. Set a goal of your “ideal weight” to be reached by August 1st. Drink at least 16 ounces of water each morning.

March – Increase your morning workouts to 1 hour, add a daypack or backpack with 15-25 pounds of weight. Count your intake of calories, limit yourself to 2,000 calories. Monitor your weight. If losing weight is also a goal, you should be losing 1-2 pounds per week, and be drinking at least 24 ounces of water each morning.

April – Increase your morning workout to 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours, increase the weight in your backpack to 30-50 pounds, use a walking stick. Be monitoring your weight and watch your calorie intake (max 2,000) and output. 3,500 calories = 1 pound of fat. You may want to invest in a calorie counting polar watch and belt. That way you can track how many calories you are burning daily. You should be improving overall health, building and firming up muscles, and dropping the pounds. Drink a lot of water.

May – Increase your morning workout to 1 1/2 hours, backpack weighing in at 30-50 pounds, reach 50 pounds by the end of May. Load your pack with water in a jug, drop the water at your highest elevation to prevent damage to your knees on the downhill portion of your workout. Eat right, lose weight. Drink a lot of water.

June – This is the month you get into “Sheep Shape.” By the end of June you should be in good enough shape to successfully enjoy a backpack hunt. Increase your morning workout to 2 hours, add a 6 gallon water jug to your backpack, put a sleeping bag under the jug to prevent it from riding too low in your pack. Your pack should weigh 65-70 pounds. Drop the water at your high point. You should be within 5-10 pounds of your goal weight, 2,000 calorie daily intake maximum, drinking at least 48 ounces of water in the morning.

July – Your turn from “in-shape” guy to the envy of all your hunting buddies – sheep fear you. You should be wearing your hunting boots that you intend on hunting in this fall. Remember your walking stick as you can slip easier with your 70 pound pack, increase your workout time to 2 1/2 hours. By the end of July you should be at goal weight and know what foods work best for nutrition, building strength, as well as weight loss. Drink 60 plus ounces water each morning.

August-December – Go hunting, watch your weight, workout 3-4 days a week to maintain your physical fitness. Eat healthy and gain a few pounds just prior to each physically demanding hunt. Because you have been working out with a 70 pound pack, when you go hunting your pack will feel light and easy to carry even in the roughest terrain. You are superman, you can do it.