

# Training Tips & Advice

Getting Trail-Ready for the Six Foot Track

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The Six Foot Track is achievable for most people with a reasonable fitness base - but the right preparation makes an enormous difference. Here are the key areas to focus on.

## 1. Descent Training - Your #1 Priority

The Blue Mountains is famous for its steep, rocky descents. Day 1 starts with a significant drop from Katoomba into Megalong Valley via Nellies Glen. Your quads will work hard on the way down - and knee pain on descents is the most common complaint on this track.

### How to train for descents

- Walk or run downhill regularly - this sounds obvious, but most people only train on flat ground or uphill
- Eccentric squats: stand on a step, lower slowly on one leg (3 seconds down), use both legs to return. 3 x 10 each leg
- Loaded step-downs: step down off a box while holding weight, landing softly. Trains the shock absorption you need on rocky trail
- Stair walking: find a tall building or stadium and descend repeatedly with your pack on
- Trekking poles: practise using them on downhills - two poles correct = 25% less load on each knee

## 2. Train With Your Actual Pack

Your body needs to adapt to carrying 7–8 kg over many kilometres. Don't wait until the hike to find out your pack fits badly or your boots rub.

- Start training with 3 kg from week 5, progressing to full pack weight by week 12
- Wear your actual hiking boots - not cross-trainers. Break them in thoroughly before week 10
- Use the training hikes to trial your full gear setup, including sleeping gear and food weight
- Adjust pack fit, straps, and hip belt during training, not on the track

*Target pack weight: 7–8 kg total, including all food and water for the day. Heavier than this significantly increases injury risk over 3 days.*

## 3. Nutrition on Trail

Multi-day hiking burns significantly more calories than everyday life. Undereating is a common mistake that leads to fatigue, poor decision-making, and injury.

## Daily calorie target

- Aim for 2,500–3,000 calories per day on the track
- Breakfast: oats, muesli, or a hot dehydrated meal before departing each morning
- Snacks: every 60–90 minutes on the trail - nuts, bars, chocolate, jerky
- Lunch: eat on the move or at a scenic break - sandwich wraps, crackers, nut butter
- Dinner: hot dehydrated meal at camp - calories and morale

## Hydration

- Drink before you're thirsty - by the time you feel thirst, you're already mildly dehydrated
- Aim for 500 ml per hour during active hiking, more in warm conditions
- Add electrolytes to at least 1–2 litres per day - helps prevent cramp and fatigue
- Filter or treat ALL water on the track, including from tanks

## 4. Foot Care & Blister Prevention

Blisters are the most common complaint on the Six Foot Track. Prevention is far easier than treatment.

- Break in your boots before the hike - wear them on at least 6 training walks of 2+ hours each
- Wear the same socks you'll use on the hike during all training. Synthetic or merino wool only
- Apply anti-chafe balm (e.g. BodyGlide) to heels and toes before each day
- At the first sign of a hot spot, STOP and apply blister prevention (Compeed, ENGO patch, or tape)
- Dry your feet and change socks at lunchtime if wet
- Gaiters prevent debris from entering boots, which is a leading cause of blisters on bush tracks

## 5. Mental Preparation

42km over 3 days is as much a mental challenge as a physical one. Day 1 is the hardest - it's the longest, starts with a steep descent, and your legs are fresh but your pack is heaviest.

- Break each day into sections, not one overwhelming distance. 'Just get to the next waypoint'
- Accept that your legs will hurt after Day 1. That's normal - they recover overnight
- The group is your biggest asset - work together, look out for each other, and celebrate small wins
- If someone is struggling, slow down as a group. There's no rush - we finish together

*Day 2 is often described as the best day - your body has adapted, you're in the rhythm, and the finish is getting closer. Look forward to it.*

## 6. Common Injuries & Prevention

- **Knee pain (IT band / runner's knee):** Most common on steep descents. Prevent with: descent training, strong quads, trekking poles, and taking small steps on downhill rather than long strides.
- **Blisters:** See Foot Care section above. Treatment on trail: drain carefully with a sterile needle, cover with Compeed or blister plaster, do not remove the skin.
- **Ankle sprain:** Wear ankle-support boots. Watch your footing on rocky sections. If sprained, RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) - a creek crossing provides the ice.
- **Lower back pain:** Caused by poor pack fit. Ensure 70–80% of pack weight sits on your hips via the hip belt, not on your shoulders. Adjust the load lifter straps.
- **Muscle cramp:** Usually caused by dehydration and electrolyte loss. Prevention: stay hydrated, add electrolytes, eat regularly. Treatment: stretch the affected muscle slowly.

## 7. Blue Mountains Specific Tips

- Weather moves in fast from the west - keep rain gear at the top of your pack, not buried at the bottom
- Nellies Glen (Day 1 descent) has timber steps - use the full width of each step, not just the edge
- Coxs River is a significant water crossing - boots off, trekking poles out, face upstream and move sideways if fording
- September is snake active season (warmer days) - wear boots and long trousers, watch where you step and place your hands
- Mobile reception is patchy throughout the track - don't rely on phone maps. Download offline maps (Maps.me or Alltrails)
- The track is generally well-signed but in mist or low visibility, a topographic map and compass are essential