

Training Plan - Ride Africa

If you haven't already, make sure you have sourced all the necessary gear and checked out your best local facilities to undertake your training.

What kit do I need?

1. An entry level Mountain Bike (MTB). We will be cycling on entry-level mountain bikes in Kenya so its best that you use one to train on in the UK. If you're not in possession of one, perhaps a friend or neighbor would have one you could borrow? They are pretty common in family sheds. If this is not an option, they are widely available to hire in trail centres, parks and other such facilities
2. Helmet. Safety first, always. Whether you are cycling in a field, in a car park or on the dirt roads of Africa. A helmet is a must. Please don't neglect to wear your helmet.
3. Cycling shorts. Baggy or tight, it doesn't matter. It's best you get comfortable in cycling shorts as early as possible in your training so you can get used to wearing them.
4. Cycling Gloves. Whether you use them or not in the UK, they are definitely advised in Africa as the road vibrations can be severe. It would be advised to get used to them now.
5. Cycling Shoes. They are optional but certainly help a lot on climbs. Once you get them you really won't go back and like the other gear listed above it's advised to get used to them before the trip.

Where should I train?

The best place to prepare for this trip is, of course, everywhere. The route you will be cycling has every type of road surface imaginable: form; smooth; tarmac; lumpy concrete; to red dirt, both dry and wet. Parks and trail centres are a must, as you will get used to going from path to paved. Don't be afraid to practice jumping up and down from curbs, as this is a common occurrence on African roads. If you don't have time but do have a gym membership then try to sign up for a spinning class, nothing beats the real thing but spinning is better than nothing!

10 week training plan

Week 1 - 20-30km

Long rides are banned during the first week on your bike. You need to get to know your gear, your bike and build up your confidence. We advise you start out on good, tarmac surfaces for now and get out for approx. 20-30km at the very most in one or even two sessions on week 1. It is vital that you enjoy this week and are left asking for more. You need to get off the bike on a high and look forward to week 2!

Week 2 - 40km

You're going to crank your training up a gear this week, quite literally. You should aim to cover 40km. Start looking at your hydration when cycling and listening to your body. Try to take note of what you eat and how it affects you on the bike when you eat it. Ensure you eat a good breakfast before cycling and bring some snacks along with you for your cycle. Cereal bars, wine gums or jelly sweets are always nice snacks to bring with you. Make sure you drink plenty of water before heading off and carry a bottle with you. You need to get comfortable drinking whilst cycling. Whilst this may seem obvious and easy, it's very much a skill that may be taken for granted!]

Week 3 - 50km

This will be a noticeable step up, so do it all on a good surface. Getting comfortable with 50km will get you ready for the standard distances you will be cycling in Africa. Take a break halfway through for about 10 minutes max. No longer though, as you do not want to cool down all together. When in Africa you will need to do this sort of distance in one go without a break, so try to get yourself ready for that, both physically and mentally. Spending 3 hours on the bike at one time is where you are headed...even though you might not be there yet!

Week 4 - 60km

Take last week's ride and experience and start adding in some mixed surfaces. Plan a route that takes you through parks, trails and some traffic too. Get used to the fact that you may cycle on a silent track for a while and suddenly find yourself on a busy road with

hazards everywhere. This week should be about learning that even when you are tired you have to think, look and listen to stay safe.

Week 5 - 70km

This will be getting close to a typical day's distance to travel whilst in Africa. Remember you are getting into longer distances now and will need to set the time aside in your schedule to complete the cycle and especially more in the weeks ahead.

Week 6 - 90km

Week 6 is quite simply about stepping it up a notch. Mixed surfaces, makes sure you are eating and drinking properly, and just fit the time in.

Week 7 - 110km

Same again, but just step add the extra kilometres in.

Week 8 - 130km

This distance should now be done over two consecutive days. We would recommend you push yourself hard on the first day, followed by getting up and cycling straight after breakfast on the next. The next two weeks of your training will be about getting familiar with the routine, getting up tired and cycling again. Again this training will not only be physical but a form of mental training.

Week 9 - 170km

Similar to week 9, this should be done over two consecutive days. Push yourself harder on the first day so your body will struggle that little bit more when you finish the distance on the second.

Week 10 - 0km

Week 12 is all about rest. You need to ensure that your body is well rested to begin what is sure to be the trip of your lifetime!