

MY TRAINING

FITNESS BASICS

The two most important elements in your preparation for the Flinders Escape are your level of fitness and the way you set up your bike.

Fitness is all about your basic physical condition and your cycling fitness which involves the muscles and parts of your body you only use (or feel) when riding your bike for longer distances.

Riding, like all other aerobic activities, uses specific muscles that need to be exercised and trained. You may think you are fit if you exercise regularly, but when you ride for long distances you may soon find, by increasing soreness, that you really do have muscles you didn't realise you had before.

As you prepare for your ride make sure you maintain your general fitness and lead an active lifestyle. Regular stretching or yoga exercises are also very useful for developing muscle flexibility, fitness and strength.

The most essential aim of a personal training programme is to set goals and targets and to ride regularly to achieve them. To train for the event you need to build up your general fitness level so you can comfortably cover the daily ride average of approximately 65km (based on total distance divided by the number of days of actual riding). To do this we recommend a series of training rides of varying distances building up to a distance of 110km (a little longer than the longest day of the ride) closer to the event.

The chart below outlines recommended rides in a six-week programme:

WEEK	LONGEST RIDE	OTHER RIDES
1	30km	15km – 20km
2	45km	20km – 30km
3	60km	25km – 35km
4	80km	30km – 40km
5	95km	35km – 45km
6	110km	40km – 55km

The training schedule above can be slotted into a busy lifestyle but it really helps to have a riding buddy / partner or group. It's very easy to roll over in a warm bed and go back to sleep instead of going on that early morning ride. Knowing that your friends are waiting for you will often provide the necessary motivation to ride regularly.

If you don't have a regular riding group to train with at home, try making contact with other riders through your local bike shop or cycling organisation. If you live here in South Australia, check out Bicycle SA's [Rides Programme](#) for regular group rides around metropolitan Adelaide and rural South Australia.

Bicycle SA's Grand Slam series is another great way to build up your capacity to tackle longer distances. Check out www.bikesa.asn.au for details.

To keep track of your progress it's best to keep a training log where you can record your rides, their distances and comments about your fitness development. You may think it unnecessary at first but this type of information helps you track your progress and boosts your morale.

Another great way to ride more kilometres into a crowded lifestyle is to combine your training with a ride to work, school, college or university. Riding to work can be a great way of starting the day and provided that you can find a reasonably stress-free cycle route you will feel much better for it. Check out the [Bike Direct](#) maps for the best routes around Adelaide.

TRAINING CHECK LIST

Organise a training partner / buddy. It's easier to train with family or friends so ask around and see if someone else can join you on regular training sessions. It's hard to miss a session if you know that your training partner or buddy will be disappointed.

Check your equipment. Always do your training on the bike you are going to use on the Annual Tour. If you have to change or upgrade equipment do so as early as possible. New saddle, handlebars or stem can cause dramatic changes to your riding comfort and style. Make any necessary changes as early as possible to give your body time to adjust.

Set up your optimum riding position. Use the bike set up guide to make sure that your bike is adjusted for your best riding position.

Wear the right clothing. Clothing designed for riding is very comfortable and moves with your skin without chafing and rubbing. Check out the WHAT SHOULD I WEAR? section in the My Gear download.

Practice group riding techniques. If you're new to riding in large groups, you should try to ride at least some of your training runs with groups of six or more in a bunch. Be predictable and ride in a straight line and communicate clearly to others in the bunch. Remember if you tip the wheel in front it is almost always you who falls. Check out BUNCH RIDING SKILLS FOR CYCLISTS.

Brush up on the road rules. As most of your training is going to be on open roads, it is a good idea to be up to speed on the road rules and be aware of your rights and responsibilities as a road user. Check out the [South Australian road rules](#) relating to cycling.

Warm up before you start. Don't rush into strenuous riding when your muscles are cool. Always warm up and stretch before you set out from home or from the campsite each day. During the Annual Tour this may mean getting out of bed 30 minutes earlier!

Take it easy starting out. This advice particularly applies to the first day on the road. Give your body a chance to settle into a comfortable rhythm and, where possible, save your maximum exertion for the hills – there are plenty of these.

Keep your body hydrated. The moisture you sweat out on the road has to be replaced so you must drink plenty of water as you ride. Always carry at least two large 750ml water bottles and / or a hydration pack, and make sure these are filled at the start and at each refreshment station. If you find that you're not needing to fill up your water bottles at each refreshment station, this is because you're not drinking enough! All refreshment stations are signposted and offer water, juices, as well as cake, biscuits and fruit. Food is critical to your health and performance. Don't forget your high carbohydrate dinner and breakfast and take some high-energy snacks food with you to eat along the way. Check out [KEEPING HYDRATED](#).

TRAINING TIPS by Brett Aitken – Olympic Gold Medallist

The challenges of riding over 100km are destined to test some riders to their physical and mental limitations if you aren't ready for it. It will therefore help if you go into the ride expecting tough conditions but prepared and confident to overcome these challenges that will consist of a combination of distance, hilly terrain, wind and heat.

By following some of these guidelines and tips we hope your ride will be both successful, enjoyable and a very memorable one.

Unlike the Professional cyclist, many of us don't have 8 hours a day to train for a long distance cycling event. This makes it more important to get in a training programme that consists of a structure of both higher intensity and long endurance sessions.

For most people a normal working week is from Monday to Friday and the available hours for training are normally restricted. It is therefore a good idea to do the higher intensity sessions on two of these days that are spaced apart from the others to promote recovery. For example Tuesday and Thursday might be good days to do hard training sessions while Monday, Wednesday and Friday may be a short light recovery ride of 30 minutes to one hour.

What type of hard training should I do?

The best type of hard training to get fast improvements should consist of some short interval training efforts that can be done out on the road or on an indoor trainer. These may include up to 4 or 5 intervals that last about 5 minutes. On a Perceived Exertion Level (PER) of 1 to 10 with 1 being very easy and 10 being extremely hard the PER level should be around 8 or 9. Have a short 5 to 10 minute recovery between each interval and then go again. With a 15 to 20 minute warm-up the whole session should only take 60 to 90 minutes but it will be the equivalent of going out and doing a 3 to 4 hour steady road ride.

What about endurance rides?

If you've got a bit more time on the weekends then this is a good time to do some steady long rides. Aim to do a gradual progression and build up in training in the weeks leading up to it. Each week add about 10km in distance to your previous weeks long ride. By about two weeks out from the big ride you should be able to complete about two 80km rides in a row or a single 100km ride on the weekend. Try and include some tough climbs in your training rides as well.

Simulate Ride Day

If this is your first big ride it may be worth going through a ride simulation day where you do everything you expect to do on the day. This includes things such as preparing food, equipment, clothing, drinks and actually doing the ride. Conditions will always be different on the day but experience and preparation can make your ride all the more successful if you have learned from previous mistakes.

Nutrition

During training your nutritional habits play a huge part in how energized you feel on a daily basis. High intensity efforts deplete your carbohydrate stores and break down muscle while the long endurance rides will help you burn off some unwanted fat. Knowing this you should plan ahead your meals with the next day's training in mind. If you have a harder day coming up, then in the previous 24 hours try keeping your carbohydrate sources of food at a higher level (60-70% of daily calories).

If you have a recovery day coming up and have just completed a hard day where you might need some muscle repair then raise your protein intake to about 50% of that day's total calorie intake. Carbohydrate sources include pasta, cereals, bread, rice etc. and protein sources include meat, fish, eggs, milk etc.

Carbohydrate loading before the event

In the week leading up to the event it is important that you keep your training light and easy. A light easy ride is better than no training at all. The movement will promote blood flow to the muscles for recovery while keeping them supple and feeling better and better each day. If you combine this with an increase in carbohydrate meals to 75% of daily calories for the last 4 days before the event then you will be fully energized going into the day of the ride.

The effect of carbo loading has a dual benefit as well by pre-hydrating your body with precious water and therefore reducing possible dehydration on the day. It does this because the body stores 2.7 grams of water for every 1 gram of carbohydrate (glycogen) stored. Don't be alarmed if your weight goes up during this carbo loading period, as it is purely water retention.

Eating and Drinking on the day

Don't do anything drastically different to what you would normally do when it comes to your pre-event meal but try and finish a couple of hours before the start. The last thing you want is an upset stomach because you tried something different to what you'd normally do. If you've loaded up well your body should be stored with plenty of energy for the ride but you will need to keep topping it up throughout the ride with foods that are high in glucose and sugars. Fruit bars, cakes, muesli bars, bananas, jam sandwiches and even a bit of chocolate are all good sources of energy during a ride.

Hydration will be crucial and the best way to tackle this is by drinking glucose polymer sports drinks throughout the ride. They also act as another source of energy. If it's a really hot day start drinking 150 to 250ml every 15 minutes starting a couple of hours out from the start of the event and continue this on throughout the ride.

Pace Yourself and Stick to the Plan

In the excitement of the occasion it is very easy to go out much faster than you planned. Adrenaline and the competitor in you can sometimes take over wanting to keep up with the pack in front. Without a doubt you will probably surprise yourself in your capabilities but initially you should stick to your plan.

Fatigue and dehydration can come on very quickly when everything seemed completely fine only moments before so go steady early on then come home strong at the end if you feel good. That way you will finish on a real high and enjoy the ride a whole lot more. Have fun and good luck!