

## Planning Your Altitude Training

### Choosing your altitude training venue

There is a huge choice of venues available to athletes looking to live and train at altitude. There are regions of high altitude on each continent and both sides of the equator. Selection of a suitable venue very much comes down to an individual's training requirements, together with personal preferences. These are just some of the things to consider:

**The time of year** - A lot of the high altitude venues in Europe and America are covered in snow during the winter and spring months, while the opposite is true for Australia. Most venues in Africa, and Central and South America are available all year round.

**The phase of your training year** - The high and location at which you choose to train may be determined by the stage of your training cycle. Higher altitudes may be more appropriate for early season base work, while a track and gym may be essential amenities closer to the season.

**The amount of time you have available** - While a minimum of 4 weeks at altitude is recommended for maximum adaptation, individuals don't always have that much time available to them. Spending a day travelling to some exotic location (and back) may eat into valuable time.

**The type of training protocol you are planning on implementing** - Live-high, train-low training procedures are only possible in some of the common altitude training venues.

**Whether or not you plan on racing on returning to sea level** - Jet lag and travel fatigue may hinder performance upon return to sea level. Additional thought may need to go into whether or not facilities are adequate for race-specific sessions, and whether the altitude is too high to carry out the required quality sessions.

**Your training surface preference and other training requirements** - Do you need a track or gym? Are there alternative training options if you get injured? Can you continue to cross train? Is there a suitable variety of off-road trails? Are there traffic-free roads to carry out your road marathon sessions?

**Your budget** - Travelling in groups may help save money in some venues, but travelling alone in others (e.g. Kenya), may not be a financial disadvantage. Car hire is a hidden cost, but some venues don't require access to your own transport. While the flight to most African countries may be expensive, the cost of living is much lower than in Europe; a balance which swings in Africa's favour if very long trips are planned. Self-catering usually works out cheaper, so this should be considered when booking accommodation. While all-inclusive camps are less hassle, they usually work out a lot more expensive than booking everything yourself.

**Whether or not you're travelling with other people** - If you are travelling with non-running partners or friends, make sure that there is something for them to do while you're training. Mexico City is one example of a city with lots to do, but smaller towns like Fall's Creek may not be so appealing to people who like to keep busy. Kenya and Ethiopia are good for the full cultural experience, and are also great for solo travellers as it's easy to meet and be-friend like-minded individuals.

### Popular Altitude Training Venues

Toluca, Mexico	2,700m	Eldoret, Kenya	2,100m	St Moritz, Switzerland	1,850m
Mammoth Lakes, CA, USA	2,400m	Park City, UT, USA	2,100m	Colorado Springs, CO, USA	1,850m
Iten, Kenya	2,400m	Belmeken, Bulgaria	2,000m	Nairobi, Kenya	1,650m
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	2,350m	Sestriere, Italy	2,050m	Boulder, CO, USA	1,650m
Sierra Nevada, Spain	2,300m	Kesenoy-Am, Russia	1,950m	Ifrane, Morocco	1,650m
Mexico City, Mexico	2,250m	Tsaghkadzor, Armenia	1,950m	Falls Creek, Australia	1,600m
Los Alamos, NM, USA	2,200m	Kunming, China	1,900m	Albuquerque, NM, USA	1,600m
Sante Fe, NM, USA	2,150m	Lake Tahoe, CA, USA	1,900m	Secunda, South Africa	1,600m
Dullstroom, South Africa	2,100m	San Luis Potosi, Mexico	1,850m	Davos, Switzerland	1,550m
Flagstaff, AZ, USA	2,100m	Font Romeu, France	1,850m	Potchefstroom, South Africa	1,400m

### Interested in finding out more?

Wilber, R. L. *Altitude Training and Athletic Performance*, 2004, published by Human Kinetics

Egan, E. Altitude Training Venues. Athletics Weekly Online, 1st Nov 2012, [www.athleticsweekly.com](http://www.athleticsweekly.com)

### Essential Packing List

#### • Sunscreen and Sunglasses

The sun's UV rays are much stronger at altitude than at sea level even though the temperatures may be cooler.



#### • High Carbohydrate Snacks

Carbohydrate replacement is very important at altitude, so is probably a good idea to bring a supply of your favourite cereal bars (at least enough for the first few days until you get your hands on local snack supplies).

#### • Warm Clothes

Low humidity means that temperatures can drop drastically and quickly once the sun sets.

#### • Vitamin Supplements

Altitude training places additional iron and antioxidant needs on the body. Where possible athletes should eat a varied diet high in fresh fruit and vegetables, but supplements are advised if this is not possible.

#### • Hand Sanitizer

Hygiene levels in most African countries is not what would be expected in the western world. Eating on-the-go also often involved eating with the hands.

#### • Entertainment

Training camps can be boring at the best of times, with lots of free time to kill between sessions. Many of the popular training destinations offer little in way of distraction.

#### • Heart rate monitor

Training to HR zones ensures that you don't over train at altitude, when the same pace will represent a high percentage of your VO2max.

### Before-you-go checklist

• Get haemoglobin and haematocrit levels checked at least 4 weeks before travelling, and take supplements if required.

• Check vaccine and prophylactic requirements. Some vaccines require at least 2 weeks to work, so give yourself adequate time.

• Get a dental check-up. Dental problems such as infection can be an even bigger nightmare at altitude than at sea level.

