

# THE KOKODA CHALLENGE

AUSTRALIA'S TOUGHEST TEAM ENDURANCE EVENT

## TRAINING GUIDES



BASE TRAINING & TRAIL TRAINING



# LET'S GET STARTED!

Training for The Kokoda Challenge takes time and hard work! Being prepared means that you are more likely to enjoy your experience.

The average drop-out rate of participants sits at 25%. By providing a base training plan, we hope more participants will get to experience the exhilaration of crossing the finish line with their team.

This guide includes Base Fitness Training along with a 20-week training guide. The guides are not here to scare you off, but to better prepare your mind and body for the journey ahead. Preparation and giving your best is the only recipe for success!

## BASE TRAINING PLAN

The aim of this stage of your training is to get your body physically conditioned to handle the rigours of trail walking/running. If you have not done much bushwalking in the past, this is essential training for you. If you are an experienced bush walker, this training can still be of great benefit!

When we reference base fitness training, we are incorporating all other means of training (outside of bushwalking) to get the body in shape. Things like road running (for cardio fitness), cycling, strength/core training, anaerobic training (also known as interval training) and agility-type training are all types of base fitness training.





# WEEK 1 - ENDURANCE TRAINING

Look at spending your first week hitting the parks or road with some short runs. The distance covered depends on your running ability.

If you're not a runner, there is nothing wrong with a walk/jog combination. We will be incorporating other training into your week as we progress. You can mix this up with cycling or swimming if that is your forte, but you need to do at least one run in the week to condition your muscle joints for the intense stress they will come under out on the tracks.

## WEEK 2 - INTRODUCE STRENGTH TRAINING

On the days that you are not doing endurance training, you will need to start incorporating strength training into your regime. Remember, you still need to get out for your run this week!

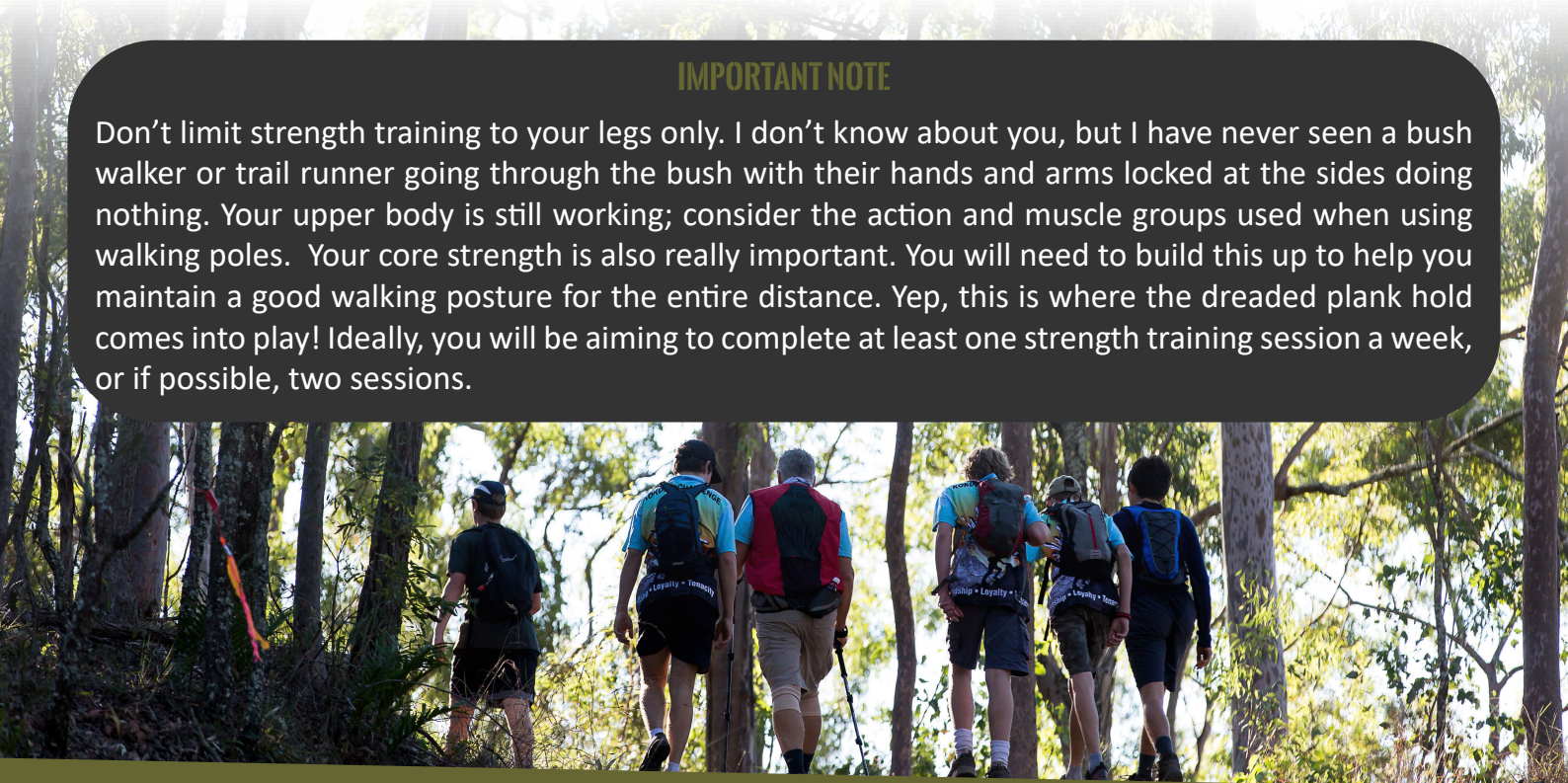
Strength training means putting your muscles under stress in order to build their ability to handle the hills (downhill especially!). For those of you who have never competed in a Kokoda Challenge, the course is incredibly taxing on your body and muscles. The stress you put on your ankles, knees and hip joints is enormous. By doing a strength program, you give your body the best chance of getting through the Challenge (and your training) injury-free.

Remember the first big goal is to make it to the start line first, then the finish line second!

Many of you will have gym memberships and may even have access to a Personal Trainer within the gym or independently. If gyms aren't your thing, strength training can also be performed outdoors without gym equipment.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Don't limit strength training to your legs only. I don't know about you, but I have never seen a bush walker or trail runner going through the bush with their hands and arms locked at the sides doing nothing. Your upper body is still working; consider the action and muscle groups used when using walking poles. Your core strength is also really important. You will need to build this up to help you maintain a good walking posture for the entire distance. Yep, this is where the dreaded plank hold comes into play! Ideally, you will be aiming to complete at least one strength training session a week, or if possible, two sessions.





# WARMING UP & STRETCHING

Before we go any further with the training plan, now is a good time to emphasise the importance of a good warm up and stretch down. When you start to get deep into your training and preparation, you may start to notice a tightness in your leg muscles, whether it be your quads, calves, ITB (Iliotibial band) or Achilles heel. This is all due to the repetitive stress that is being put on these muscle groups by the training you are doing.

A crucial step is to complete a warm-up before you start your training, whether strength/endurance or bush walking. Many of you start your training at the base of Pages Pinnacle near Polly's Cafe. The blood hasn't properly circulated through your muscles before you hit that big hill, so just do a quick warm up such as a jog on the spot, or some dynamic stretching.

It is vital after you have finished your session for the day to do a stretch down:

- Quad stretch
- Hamstring stretch
- Calf stretch
- Achilles heel stretch
- ITB stretch
- Upper body; shoulders, back etc.





# WEEK 3 - INTERVAL TRAINING/AGILITY/HILL WORK

This is the week you can consider stepping away from endurance training and moving to more short course interval type training.

A suggestion here is to take a run/jog from your house to a fairly steep incline hill that is in your local area. If you can find a hill that has a bit of length to it, say 300 metres and beyond, even better! With this training you can use the run from your house to the base of the hill as your warm-up, then when you get to the hill it is quite simply a case of getting to the top as quickly as you can. I would set an initial goal of about 5 hill repeats (if the hill is a decent size) and build up from there. There are many different options available to you for hill work. You could time yourself on completing the 5 repeats and try to improve on your time the following week. You could also simply increase the number of repeats you do. Another option you could try is to time yourself on the 3rd hill repeat. Then when you do your last repeat, try and beat the time you did for the 3rd. This is a great challenge as your legs are naturally fatigued at this point and you are calling on all you have to better your time, be this a power walk, jog or run.

## AGILITY TRAINING

Agility training will see you moving backwards, forwards and sideways, changing direction frequently. This will strengthen the insides and outsides of your leg muscles. Think of the terrain you will be on and the amount of stress on your knees and ankles. Your body mechanics will not only be going forward and back, but there will be a lot of sideways movement. This training will help, especially on the hill descents.

## INTERVAL TRAINING

What we're looking at achieving here is quick bursts of speed followed by an active recovery. Find yourself a large, flat park or sports field. If the area is an oval shape you could simply run around the outside of the field and pick landmarks to go to at a  $\frac{3}{4}$  run pace. You don't need any fancy equipment to do this style of training, however, it is worth consulting a professional to get the best results.





# WEEKS 4 & 5 - BACK TO ENDURANCE & STRENGTH

In Week 4, continue with your park or road running but consider adding an extra kilometre or two. Alternatively you could try and beat your previous time over the same distance. The first option is probably better, as you are focusing on endurance here over speed (unless you are trying to break a time record in the Challenge, speed is not overly relevant). You may consider joining in with your local Park Run event on Saturday morning. This is a free 5km social run held each week in many locations around the country by friendly volunteers. If you haven't already done so, go check out your local event!

As already mentioned, strength training is super important for the Kokoda Challenge, so you will still need to incorporate it into your routine this week.

In Week 5, continue your endurance and strength training. If you feel like mixing it up with some cross training, consider something different like cycling or swimming.





# WEEK 6 - INTERVAL, AGILITY, HILLS & STRENGTH

This is a perfect time to get back into hill work and interval training! You are now building the foundation of endurance fitness to the point that you can hit the hills with confidence. Remember what you achieved last time on your hill work, and attempt to improve this through either an increase in hill repeats or a better time. Complete two of these types of sessions this week to get you back in the zone. Remember, this is going to be a very warm time of the year so not only hydrate with plenty of water but have an electrolyte drink on hand too!



# WEEK 7 - INTERVAL, ENDURANCE, HILLS & STRENGTH

Time to get serious! From this week on you will need to complete at least one of each area of training to get yourself in the best condition to tackle the Challenge.

Complete at least two endurance sessions and one each of strength, agility, hill and interval training, some of which you can combine. Space them out throughout the week to give your muscles some recovery time. This will be your training plan for the next three weeks.

## TIP

Make sure you are monitoring your body for any niggling strains, and if necessary, adapt your training to rest these areas.



# WEEKS 8 - 10

Weeks 8 - 10 are much the same as Week 7.

By the time you get to the end of Week 10, you will have added or improved on a great base level of fitness for you to get started on the next phase of your training. From here on, the focus shifts to training on the bush trails, building your physical endurance and mental stamina.

## TIP

Try not to neglect these areas of training once you start your team training in the bush. They are still vital in the lead up to the Challenge, even though your focus will move to training on the trails.





# TRAINING FOR BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE

To follow on from your Base Training, we have put together a trail walking plan to get you through the next months up to event day. When training to tackle the Gold Coast Kokoda Challenge as a beginner to intermediate participant, one of the most important things to bear in mind is to “start with the end in mind” and finish as a team of four. There are many aspects of your fitness and team to be considered and prepared for such as:

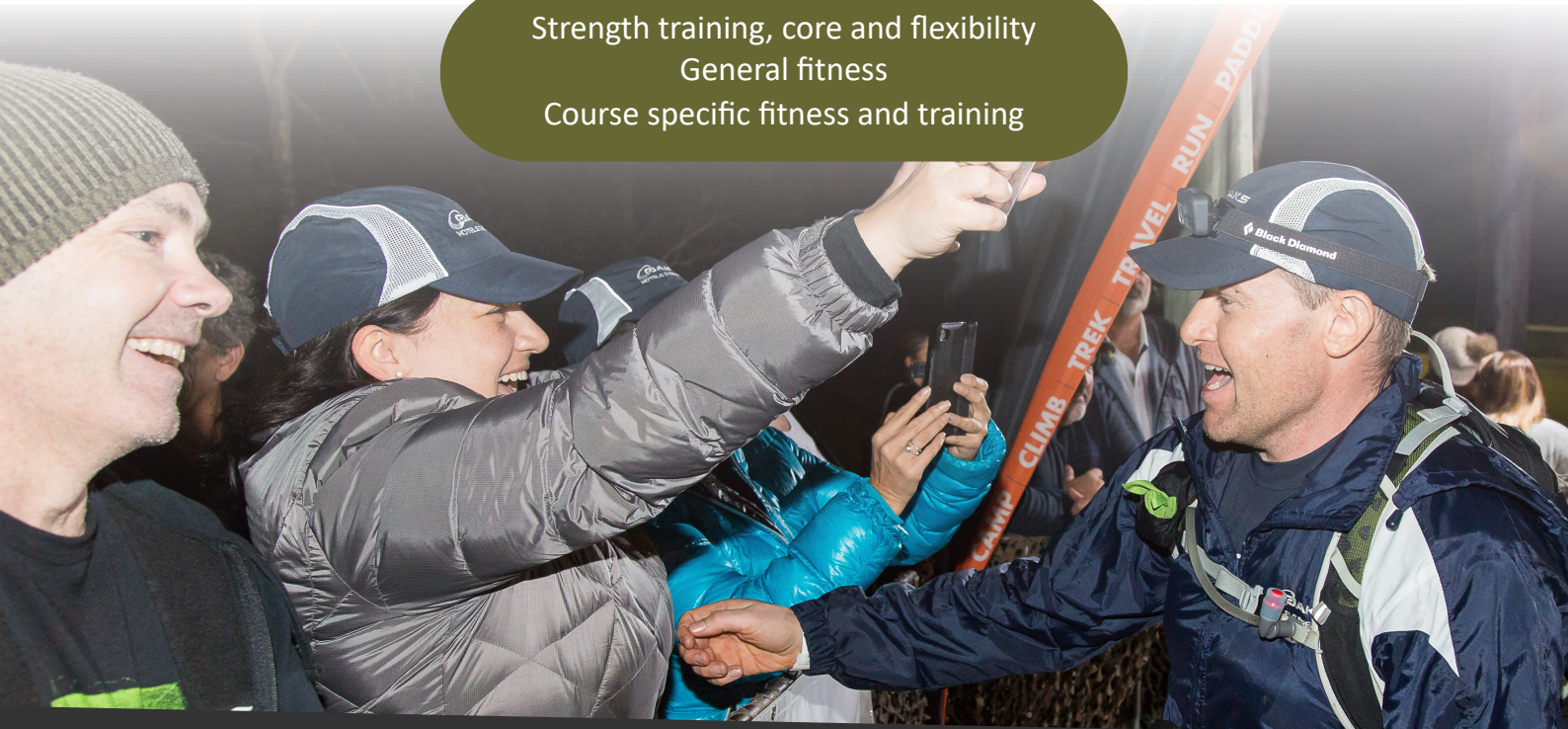
1. The improvement of your fitness level (cardiovascular specific training for the event)
2. Preparation of your body for the differing terrain (strength training and core work)
3. Understanding the terrain and knowing the track. This entails using the course notes and actually training on parts of the track to understand what is the Gold Coast Kokoda Challenge or at minimum training on a similar terrain if you live outside the Gold Coast region.
4. Getting the right team together (knowing the people you are preparing to do the challenge with and understanding what they are capable of in the middle of the night, 50 kilometres into the event)

This program will help you get from the couch to the finish line, hopefully as a full team. The Gold Coast Kokoda Challenge event has participants with many differing fitness levels. This guide attempts to make it possible for you to attain a base fitness level to complete the challenge within the time limit in as safe as possible a manner.

The Kokoda Challenge is not for the faint-hearted and it will test you on so many levels, but when you finish as a team of four you will never forget the experience. You will grow as a person and also forge a life-long bond with your team.

**The training is broken into three parts:**

Strength training, core and flexibility  
General fitness  
Course specific fitness and training





# STRENGTH, CORE & FLEXIBILITY

Let's start with strength training, core and flexibility.

In the gym nothing beats functional/compound exercises. Many people make it too complicated and try to use weights to copy the action of the sport or fitness event they are training for, but nothing beats the real thing. Strengthening the muscles that will take the pressure during the Challenge will definitely help, especially with your legs. Through strength training you will be able to improve both strength and endurance, while getting used to dealing with the lactic acid burn that you will no doubt feel when climbing the serious terrain.

## EXERCISES

These exercises are to be performed collectively. Try to do the following every second to third day, performing one to three sets until you cannot do anymore, making sure that your posture is correct at all times. These exercises will contribute to assisting you in improving your strength and fitness much faster and more effectively.

Please note that some exercises are only to be done if you have no back, ankle or knee problems. Make sure that you have consulted with your doctor before using the program outlined.

### LEGS

Squats  
Lunges  
Walking Lunges  
Jump Squats  
Static Wall Squat  
Standing Calf Raises

### UPPER BODY

Chest - Push Ups  
Back - Bent Over Dumbbell Row  
Tricep Dips (not essential but will come in handy when using poles)  
Bicep Curls (not essential but will come in handy when using poles)  
Abdominal Plank





# GENERAL FITNESS



Cardio training is essential to reach a base level of fitness. Try to do a minimum of 30 minutes at a time if possible. Think about event day; you could be on your feet for up to 39 hours, so the more you can improve your fitness level the better chance you have of making it to the finish line. The Kokoda Challenge is not a race, but the quicker you can finish the event the less fatigued you will be. The longer you are out there, the more difficult it becomes. You can start to hallucinate after 24 hours of no sleep coupled with fatigue. In saying that, it is important to stick to a pace you're used to. Event day is not the time to try and ramp up the speed!

Here are some examples of fitness conditioning training that you can do to increase your level of overall fitness to help prepare you for the event. You can choose to do one of these activities often, or mix them up and rotate between the activities that you like the most:

**WALKING / JOGGING / RUNNING FOR 5 KILOMETRES**

**HILL RUNNING**

**CIRCUIT TRAINING**

**INTERVAL TRAINING**

**TREADMILL**

**CROSS TRAINER**

**ROWING MACHINE**

**INDOOR BIKE**



# THE SPECIFICS

Now it's time for the real thing - walking the event track! Start trail walking as soon as possible and make sure that you do every part of the course that is included in the course training notes. The better you know the track, the less the surprises on the day of the event, plus your body will become more accustomed to the terrain. The best way to start is on one of the easiest parts of the track, for example Waterfall Loop CP5 – CP7, or Nerang State Forest. However, the training schedule lists the starting point as Polly's Kitchen, which is a bit more challenging. The reason for this is that it's a bit of a reality check! It reminds you just how tough, yet rewarding, the Kokoda Challenge really is.

## HOW DO I FIT TRAINING INTO MY BUSY SCHEDULE?

Try to train as a group once a week. For example, train early on a Sunday morning starting off at a fairly reasonable pace. Remember to always stay together; you are only as fast as your slowest person! You will pick up speed as the weeks go by and the training increases in intensity.

Included in this trail training plan are some options to keep the weekend training sessions from becoming too repetitive. Feel free to use the structure provided and mix it up if it works better for you. This plan is the absolute bare minimum suggested to prepare yourself for the event and needs to be coupled with additional mid week strength training and cardio sessions.

## TIP

All track training information and section profile graphs can be found on the website. Download and print off the training notes and carry them with you when training to avoid getting lost!





# TRAIL TRAINING PLAN

## WEEK 1

### POLLY'S KITCHEN/TOP OF HILL RETURN

Start at the carpark 500m towards Springbrook from Polly's Kitchen. There is a toilet block here and the track starts straight over the road through the National Park gate. Using your training notes, follow the fire trail to the top of the hill/mountain to the log that is in a clearing at the top, turn around and then return to the carpark. On this walk you can car pool as you will only need one car for this walk. Although only 5 kilometres, it is a very steep climb and a great introduction to the Kokoda Challenge course.

## WEEK 2

### WATERFALL LOOP

The waterfall loop is from the corner of Pine Creek Road and Murwillumbah Road. Complete the circuit to Numinbah Hall and head back to the car. This walk is 14 kilometres and relatively flat through the water crossings. There are creek crossings and it is important to see what they are like, especially closer to the actual event, so you can be better prepared for how deep they will be. Many teams change shoes at CP6 after this section.

## WEEK 3

### MT NIMMEL LODGE RETURN

Park in the clearing 200m before Mt Nimmel Lodge on Austinville Road. Mt Nimmel Lodge is private property so please do NOT enter the property. Public toilets are located 500m back along the road. Being careful of traffic, follow Austinville Road then turn left into Tallowwood Road. Follow the training route up Mudgeeraba Hill, along the ridge and down to Austinville Road. Return back to Mt Nimmel Lodge. This is one of the hardest hills in the course. It is 13 kilometres, however, the hills are very steep. This will give you an idea of how challenging the event can be. You can car pool to this venue also as it's a return course. To avoid disturbing residents, please do not train along Tallowwood Road at night; please use the Bonogin Road trail instead.





# TRAIL TRAINING PLAN



## WEEK 4 NIGHT WALK

Decide on a course/distance mentioned in this plan your team is comfortable with, and walk it in the dark! Don't forget headtorches, and please avoid residential areas.

## WEEK 5 POLLY'S KITCHEN TO PINE CREEK ROAD CORNER

Start at the carpark 500m towards Springbrook from Polly's Kitchen. Follow the course over the top of Polly's hill and down the other side to where you exit the National Park steel gate onto Pine Creek Road. Two cars are required for this one; leave the second car at the gravel turn out by the gate.

## WEEK 6 MT NIMMEL LODGE TO POLLY'S KITCHEN

CP2 to CP4. Park in the clearing 200m before Mt Nimmel Lodge on Austinville Road. Mt Nimmel Lodge is private property so please do NOT enter the property. Public toilets are located 500m back along the road. Follow the course route finishing at Polly's Kitchen. Two cars needed - park the second car across the road from Polly's.

## WEEK 7 SYD DUNCAN PARK TO BELLIS ROAD

Starting at Syd Duncan Park Lower Beechmont walk carefully along the bitumen road, down Hellfire Pass to Bellis Road. Two cars are needed for this track.

## WEEK 8 POLLY'S KITCHEN TO TRACK EXIT AT PINE CREEK RD RETURN

Start at the carpark 500m towards Springbrook from Polly's Kitchen. Follow the course over the top of Polly's hill and down the other side to where you exit the National Park steel gate onto Pine Creek Road. Return to Polly's Kitchen.



# TRAIL TRAINING PLAN

## WEEK 9

### MT NIMMEL LODGE TO POLLY'S RETURN

CP2 – CP4 – CP2. Start near Mt Nimmel Lodge and take the track to Polly's, then return to Mt Nimmel Lodge. A longer training walk including two of the events 'Big 5' hills.

## WEEK 10

### MOUNT WARNING

Start in the dark and make it to the top for sunrise! Test out those head torches again. Mt Warning is a culturally sensitive area and it is advisable to speak with the local Indigenous community about climbing.

## WEEK 11

### SYD DUNCAN PARK TO BELLIS ROAD RETURN

Starting at Syd Duncan Park Lower Beechmont walk carefully along the bitumen road, down Hellfire Pass to Bellis Road and return back up Hellfire Pass.

## WEEK 12

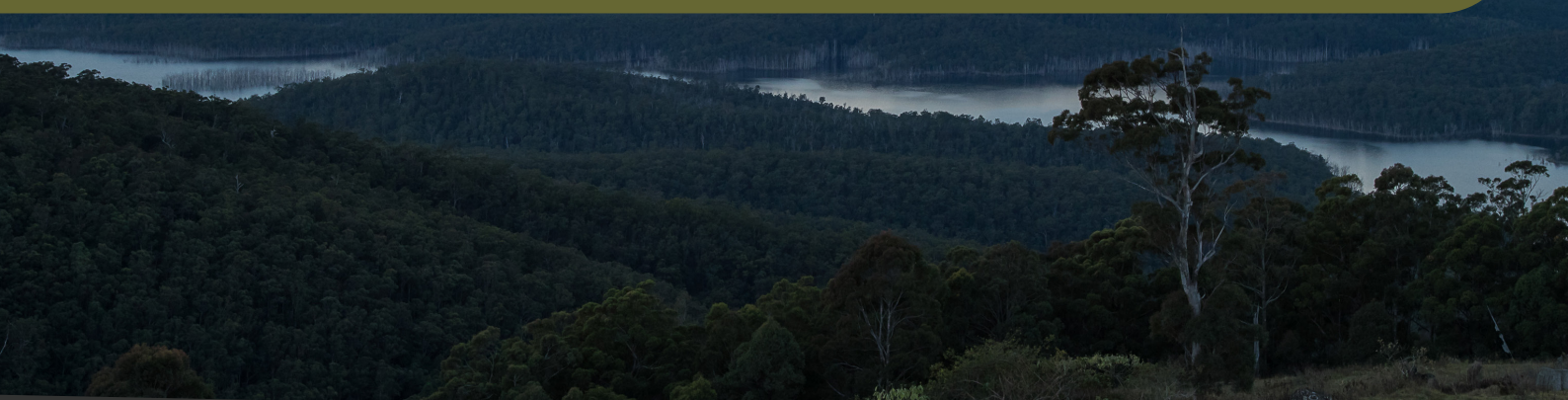
### NERANG STATE FOREST RETURN

Starting at the finish line at Nerang Velodrome, follow the course to CP12 near the corner of The Oval Drive and Beaudesert Road, then return to the Velodrome. One option is to follow the training route to increase this course to 24km. Take plenty of water as there are no refill points along this route, or leave a second car with provisions at The Oval Drive.

## WEEK 13

### POLLY'S AND WATERFALL LOOP

CP4 - CP7. Starting at Polly's, over the hill to the corner of Pine Creek Road, then complete the Waterfall Loop via Numinbah Hall. Two cars will be needed for this one, with the second left at the corner of Pine Creek Road.





# TRAIL TRAINING PLAN

## WEEK 14

### BRISBANE KOKODA CHALLENGE

You can choose to enter the separate Brisbane 30 or 48km event as a great opportunity to test out your team, your gear and strategy. There is also a 15km event which some competitors choose to do with their family or friends to give them a taste of what you get up to each weekend while out training. The event is also a fundraiser for the Kokoda Challenge Youth Program.

## WEEK 15

### NERANG STATE FOREST - RETURN NIGHT WALK

Starting at the finish line at Nerang Velodrome, follow the course out to CP12 near the corner of The Oval Drive and Beaudesert Road. Return to Velodrome. Another option is to follow the training route to increase this to 24km. Night walking is a big part of The Kokoda Challenge experience so make sure you complete at least one night walk in the bush.

## WEEK 16

### MT NIMMEL LODGE - POLLY'S - WATERFALL LOOP

This is the longest walk of this training plan. Starting near Mt Nimmel Lodge, follow the course over to Polly's then over the hill and on to complete the Waterfall Loop via Numinbah Hall. You will cover three of the 'Big 5' hills in this session. Two cars will be needed, with the second car parked where you will finish at Pine Creek Road corner.

## WEEK 17

### MT NIMMEL & POLLY'S

Starting near Mt Nimmel, follow the course over to Polly's and then on to the steel National Park gate exit onto Pine Creek Road. Two cars needed.

## WEEK 18

### POLLY'S AND WATERFALL LOOP

Polly's Kitchen over the hill to complete the waterfall loop and back to the steel National Park gate where Polly's track exits onto Pine Creek Road. Two cars needed.



**SATURDAY 18 JULY**  
**THE KOKODA CHALLENGE**