



2026 Training Plan

Pilgrims Way Challenge

Get hiking fit with our six and seven week training plans

Welcome to the *Pilgrims Way Challenge* Training Plan!

Thank you so much for stepping up to take on the **Pilgrims Way Challenge**! We're so excited you've joined us, and we're here to cheer you on every step of the way.

To help you get ready for the big day, we've put together 6 and 7 week training plans designed to build your fitness, stamina, and confidence step by step. By the end, you'll feel strong, prepared, and ready to enjoy every mile!

About the Training Plans

- **Starting point:** You should already be able to walk around 3km (2 miles) comfortably. From there, we'll gradually increase the distances week by week.
- **Balanced approach:** Your plan blends shorter weekday walks with longer weekend hikes. The weekday sessions help you build pace and try out different kit, while weekends are for distance and endurance.
- **Back-to-back days:** You'll see a few consecutive training days in the plan. These help you practice walking on tired legs, building the stamina and confidence you'll need to keep going on event day.
- **Rest and recovery:** Recovery is as important as training! Rest days and stretching sessions are included to keep you flexible and injury-free.

Making it work for you

Life is busy, and everyone's routine is different. These plans are guides, not rules. If you work weekends, do shift work, or care for others, feel free to swap days around. The important thing is consistency, not perfection.

- **Short walks:** Could you walk to work, or squeeze in a 3-mile lunchtime loop?
- **Long walks:** Use weekends (or your days off) for those longer sessions.

Your fitness level: If you're already active, perhaps a regular runner, cyclist or rambler, you may progress more quickly. But remember: long hikes are unique. Even fit runners find walking works muscles (and feet!) in different ways.

Kit and Preparation

Training isn't only about building distance, it's also about being prepared. These weeks are the perfect time to test your kit and discover what really works for you. From footwear to waterproofs, every item makes a difference to your comfort on the day. Take a look at our **Kit List** for detailed guidance so you can train, and complete the challenge, with confidence.



*Are you ready to
go the extra mile
for Pilgrims?*



Did you know?

That the 2025 Pilgrims Way Challenge raised a record-breaking **£196,000** - that's the most raised at any Pilgrims Hospices event ever!

The 25km Challenge (6-Week Training Plan)

From the historic city of Canterbury, your trail leads west through a nature reserve, and extensive orchards towards the rather intriguingly named Old Wives Lees. Then, descend to cross the valley to the pretty hilltop village of Chilham, with its ancient, timber-framed houses.

From here, the next few miles are dominated by King's Wood, where pilgrims banded together as protection against robbers. Finally, you'll descend into rolling farmland, leading to the finish in the picturesque village of Wye.

25km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 4 May	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	8km/5 miles
Week 2 W/C 11 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	9.6km/6 miles	3.2km/2 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 18 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 25 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you're feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	14.4km/9 miles – mileage increasing	3.2km/2 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 1 June	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	17.7km/11 miles - mix up your pace	4.8km/3 miles
Week 6 W/C 8 June	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Plan your diet for next week, start carb loading and increase it 2/3 days before the challenge	20.9km/13 miles – the big one before your challenge!	4.8km/3 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!

The 35km Challenge (6-Week Training Plan)

Beginning in Connaught Park, set beneath the imposing walls of Dover Castle, your path will follow an old Roman road that ran between Dover and Richborough, before passing the grand Waldershare House and its impressive mews.

The route then leads through rolling fields to Womenswold, before passing the farming villages of Patricbourne and Hode. Finally, you'll catch a glimpse of Canterbury's magnificent cathedral as you push on into the city's cobbled streets towards the finish line.

35km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 4 May	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	8km/5 miles	9.6km/6 miles
Week 2 W/C 11 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	8km/5 miles	8km/5 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 18 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 25 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you're feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	24km/15 miles – a more than a half marathon distance	6.4km/4 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 1 June	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	14.4km/9 miles – mileage increasing	4.8km/4 miles
Week 6 W/C 8 June	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Plan your diet for next week, start carb loading and increase it 2/3 days before the challenge.	23.3km/14.5 miles – the big one before your big challenge.	4.8km/4 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!

Did you know?

The Pilgrims Way Challenge is just a section of the much longer North Downs Way National Trail, which runs 246km from Farnham, Surrey all the way to the White Cliffs of Dover!

The 55km Challenge (7-Week Training Plan)

Take on the ultimate test of endurance and enjoy both sections of the Pilgrims Way described on the previous pages! After leaving Dover in the morning and experiencing all the natural beauty east Kent has to offer throughout the day, arriving at the charming village of Wye, your final destination, will be a welcome sight.



Did you know?

80% of our funding comes from the amazing generosity of our local community through donations, our shops and fundraising events such as the Pilgrims Way Challenge.

55km Challenge	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 W/C 4 May	Stretch	3.2km/2 miles	Other activity	3.2km/2 miles	Stretch	8km/5 miles	9.6km/6 miles
Week 2 W/C 11 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles	Stretch	12.8km/8 miles	8km/5 miles – your legs should be feeling stronger after your recent hikes and mileage
Week 3 W/C 18 May	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Other activity	4.8km/3 miles – increase your pace	Stretch	17.7km/11 miles – get used to the longer mileage/km	Rest day – keep stretching the muscles after your longer hike yesterday
Week 4 W/C 25 May	Stretch – your recovery days should start becoming easier & you're feeling stronger	4.8km/3 miles – hike at speed	Other activity	Rest	Stretch	27km/17 miles – more than a half marathon distance and the first of your big 3 hikes!	6.4km/4 miles – to stretch the muscles out
Week 5 W/C 1 June	Stretch	4.8km/3 miles – are you getting faster?	Other activity	6.4km/4 miles – keep up the faster pace	Stretch	37km/23 miles – the really big one before your challenge!	4.8km/4 miles
Week 6 W/C 8 June	Stretch	6.4km/4 miles	Other activity	6.4km/4 miles	Stretch	23.3km/14.5 miles – your distances are reduced so that you're well rested for the big day!	4.8km/4 miles – to stretch out your muscles after your big hike!
Week 7 W/C 15 June	Plan your diet for this week, carb loading begins!	8km/5 miles to keep your legs strong and ready to hike!	Rest – carbs, carbs, carbs!	Rest – eat well!	Rest, prepare & pack your bags for the big challenge!	The Pilgrims Way Challenge 55km/34 miles!	Recovery!