

How to Make a MOLEHILL out of a MOUNTAIN

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By Jonathan Roche

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My summer vacation schedule

Day One: Warm Up, Golf 9 Holes

Day Two: Bike the beginner level Fraser River Trail

Day Three: Hike Moderate Blue Sky Trail

Day Four: Golf 18 Holes

Day Five: Bike the Expert Chainsaw Trail

Day Six: Hike Byers Peak

Day Seven: Rest.....

If you're like so many visitors to Grand County, it just takes a few hours to realize that breathing and playing at 9,000 feet-plus is more difficult than it is at sea level. For many, although their plans are ambitious, their vacation journal winds up looking more like this:

Day One: Played six holes and my chest thumped so hard, I quit early. (Made happy hour!)

Day Two: Biked half the Fraser River Trail. Boy did my legs hurt! (Found the nearest hot tub.)

Day Three: I'm down, but not giving up! (I hiked to the hot tub, and mountain biked to the bar.)

Day Four: Golfed a full nine holes before noon! (My legs cramped at lunch. I ordered a massage.)

Day Five: Watched Tour de France reruns in my hotel room. (OK, so I'm a little exhausted!)

Day Six: Walked to town (Took pictures of Byers Peak).

Day Seven: Note for next vacation: Get into shape BEFORE I get to Grand County!

Whether you come up to Grand County once a year or you're a regular weekend warrior, you can greatly improve your high country experience by getting into shape ahead of time. And the most effective way to get in condition is to harness the power of intervals.

The Power of Intervals

You may have heard the term "interval training." It simply means that you vary the intensity of your workouts by pushing hard then resting, throughout your workout.

The most famous name associated with intervals is bike racing superstar Lance Armstrong, but many elite athletes have used the technique for years. Thanks to affordable and convenient heart rate monitors, effective heart rate-based training programs like interval training are now readily available to everyone, on practically every fitness level. (See sidebar for more information on choosing the right heart rate monitor for you.)

Most people's first question is "What does my heart rate have to do with getting in shape?" The answer is that tracking your heart rate during your workouts gives you a starting point, and helps you set realistic goals. It turns what I like to call "random acts of fitness" into a systematic plan. This helps you monitor your progress, stay motivated, and get the most efficient workout in the least amount of time. In addition, understanding how your heart rate responds to exercise can greatly decrease your chances of over- or under-training, whether your goal is to walk the Fraser River Trail, finish the Run for Independence in Winter Park, or summit Byers Peak.

As helpful as heart rate monitors are for getting fit, they are only as good as the fitness program you use them with. I recommend a good interval exercise program as the best way to put your heart rate monitor to good use. Why? Research shows that although physical activity in general is extremely beneficial, a higher intensity of physical activity can increase these benefits. The beauty of interval training is that by pushing hard for a few minutes, and then resting, it allows you to push harder the next time – therefore, you get



Photo of Clint Roberts by Todd Newcomer/Lightcap Photography

a higher intensity of effort overall as compared to regular, steady-state workouts.

Benefits of Doing Intervals vs. Steady-State Workouts:

- Strengthens your heart and lungs, increasing your cardio capacity so you can breathe better – even at altitude!
- Increases your endurance and energy, so you last longer on the hills.
- Teaches your body how to respond to lactic acid buildup in your muscles, helping you avoid the “burn.”
- Lose three times the fat and burn up to 30 percent more calories than steady-state workouts.

Intervals help you train smarter, not harder, so you get the most from every minute you invest in your health. The question is — if you're going to do something active for 30 minutes anyway, why wouldn't you do intervals?

Apply Intervals to Your Favorite Exercises, Sports, and Activities

If you're like most people I know, having a program that fits your busy lifestyle is the key to sticking with any exercise program. The great thing about intervals is that because they are based on varying your heart rate, you can do them with almost any of your favorite exercises, activities or sports.

Are you planning to ride the Fat Tire Classic? Add a 30-40 minute interval workout on your bike ride three times a week.

Are you walking or running the 5K Habitat Hobble? Add a 30-40 minute interval workout on your walk around the block three times a week.

Are you a new mother or father getting in shape for a future triathlon? Run your intervals while pushing a baby stroller on the Fraser River Trail.

You can use intervals on a treadmill or in the pool at the gym, or on your elliptical or other exercise machines at home. Continue your interval workouts on the road at the hotel gym or with a walk or run outside. You can also add intervals to winter sports like cross-country skiing and snowshoe running.

Whatever your vacation plans include, you can prepare most efficiently, and with more health and fitness benefits, if you incorporate intervals just three times a week into a half-hour fitness routine. (For a free sample interval workout, visit www.BreakthroughHF.com.)

After just a month of regular interval workouts, you will find a marked improvement in your breathing when you walk up the stairs at work, in your energy level during your daily activities, and in your endurance in everything from playing basketball with the kids to getting in a full round of golf with your friends. The next

time you visit Grand County, we'll be looking for you — making molehills out of mountains — on the 18th hole at Pole Creek Golf Course, at the top of the Chainsaw bike trail, and at the summit of Byers Peak!

Jonathan Roche, a Certified Personal Trainer, award-winning fitness video instructor, eight-time Ironman™ Triathlon and 11-time Boston Marathon finisher, is one of the nation's foremost authorities on heart rate-based Interval Training.

Through his company, Breakthrough Health & Fitness, and its Momentum Fitness & Weight Loss System, Jonathan promotes the use of Interval Workouts to achieve maximum fitness and weight loss in the shortest period of time. Jonathan appears regularly as a fitness expert on Denver's Channel 7, and in national magazines such as Skiing and Women's Health and Fitness. For more information on interval training and a free sample workout plus info on the Momentum system visit www.BreakthroughHF.com ■

HEART RATE MONITORS

The prices of heart rate monitors range from \$40 to hundreds of dollars. Most everyday athletes are satisfied with a monitor in the \$100 range. When choosing one for yourself, consider the monitor's features, quality and what type of program you will be using it with. Basic heart rate monitor features include ordinary watch and target heart rate zone functions, continuous ECG accurate heart rate readouts, and a stop watch. (If you are a swimmer, check to see that your monitor can be used under water.) Some of the higher end heart rate monitors count the calories you burn and allow you to download your numbers directly into your computer. Still others come with an extended package that teaches you how to use your monitor in the context of a full fitness program.

Momentum Fitness & Weight Loss System

With Premium Heart Rate Monitor (\$99.90) www.MomentumFS.com
The Momentum™ Fitness & Weight Loss System is a total personalized fitness program based on interval training. It comes complete with a premium heart rate monitor, online customized fitness software, workout DVDs and CDs, nutritional guidance, and workout log. The Momentum heart rate monitor has target heart rate zone and calories burned functions.

Polar F6™ (\$109.95) www.Polar.com

A comparable heart rate monitor, the F6 features coded transmission to prevent crosstalk with other monitors assuring a quality group workout. It is available in 3 colors, and includes all basic heart rate monitor features plus OwnZone® which automatically establishes your personal target heart rate zones and OwnCal® which tracks calories and percentage of fat burned.

Ironman Digital Heart Rate Fitness System (\$100) www.Timex.com

A heart rate monitor for the more serious athlete, this watch has basic features plus 100-lap memory including heart rate, lap time, and split time, a 100-hour chronograph with lap or split, and digital FM transmission for clear signals around exercise equipment and power lines. ■

