

Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Cherohala Challenge Training Plan

The Cherohala Challenge is an epic ride, and not one for the unprepared. But a good solid training plan will ensure your preparedness come the day of the ride. To help you become one of the prepared and confident, the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen offer the following basic information, common to nearly all training plans, and for our local riders, our planned rides to get you ready. Also included are links to other Century Training plans, if you prefer to use another plan.

Nearly all training plans have common elements, including the crucial development of solid base conditioning.

Training sessions in this phase are typically executed in a lower heart rate (zone 2), with low intensity miles paired with rest days (or active recovery days) to allow your body to recover. Successful training requires a solid conditioning base and then gradual increases in ride duration, intensity, and frequency. Everyone is different in their available time, starting point, and progression. **Consistency in this phase is key.** It is also very important to listen to your body and track your progress to see how you are responding to your training. Everyone is different and so your body will react based on your uniqueness. There's a saying that training is putting the "hay in the barn." On ride day, you will be glad you stuck to your training and have lots of hay in the barn.

If you are interested in setting up a training program, there are a couple of things you need to establish.

1. Zone 2: How do I know what Zone 2 is for me? You can use a power meter, a heart rate monitor, or at the very least Perceived Rate of Exertion (PRE). In PRE, if you can easily talk, you are in Zone 1. If you can talk, but the person listening to you knows you are exercising, then you are in Zone 2. If you cannot consistently talk to someone, you are in Zone 3 or above. If you prefer to use a heart rate monitor or power meter, use the following links to determine your training zones.

[FTP Tests: How to perform 20-Minute, 8-Minute, and Ramp Tests - Chris Carmichael](#)
[Trainright Guide to Heart Rate Training for Cycling - CTS](#)

2. Scheduling: You need to determine how much time and what days you can regularly (remember...consistency) dedicate to your training plan. You cannot stay consistent if you set yourself up for failure by not being able to execute on your training plan. Be realistic and find a schedule that works in your daily life. After you establish a solid base, you will need at least 3 times per week to improve, and preferably 5 training sessions or more to see bigger gains in cycling fitness.

Depending on your conditioning, you should plan on 60-90 minute training sessions during the week and one longer (2-3 hours) endurance ride each weekend. Obviously, life sometimes gets in the way, but when it does remember that consistency is most important. You will be better off to get in even a 30-minute session several times per week, than one hour and half session

once each week. So, if some life event interrupts your program, do what you can, and then get back into your consistent training schedule as soon as your life allows.

3. Training support: Most of us already have Garmin cycling computers, if you do they have a very good Century Training program that is free through Garmin Connect. It is easy to set up and we recommend using a 13-week (March 1- June 3) program. Below we reference several free links to other training plans. You can use one or all of them to set up a plan that works for you, just be sure to include plenty of rest, base rides, and mix in some hard efforts. Consistency and tracking your progress are monumentally important. There are several free apps you can use, such as Training Peaks, or just keep a manual log, if you prefer, but it is very important to keep track of what you have done and how you felt during and after each session. You cannot improve what you cannot measure. Doing so will ensure that you stay consistent and understand what is working for you and how well it is working. If during a program, you find that you do not like it or are having trouble improving with it, try another and join it at the appropriate week of the program for the conditioning you have achieved. Regardless of the specific program you use, if you stay consistent, get plenty of rest, maintain your base, and throw in some hard intervals you will get stronger.

Join other cyclists training for the ride to keep the momentum going. A strong support structure will help to keep each cyclist working toward their goals. Besides, who doesn't love meeting up with friends to hammer out some miles?! Make it fun.

Good luck! We look forward to seeing your progress on some of our group rides!

Training plan references:

12 week beginners plan:

<https://www.bestbuddieschallenge.org/hp/12-week-century-training-blog/>

Simple 10 week plan:

<https://www.granfondoguide.com/Contents/Index/936/training-for-a-century-ride>

8 week plan from Bicycle magazine

<https://www.bicycling.com/training/a20008715/ride-a-metric-century-in-8-weeks-with-this-simple-training-plan/>

Cycle for Cause 12 week plan with resistance workouts

<https://cycleforthecause.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/C4C-2017-Training-Plan-12-Weeks-1.pdf>

12 week training plan with intervals

<https://docplayer.net/11219017-12-week-century-ride-training-program.html>

Other References:

- <https://trainright.com/trainright-guide-to-heart-rate-training-for-cycling/>
- <https://trainright.com/ftp-tests-how-to-perform-20-minute-8-minute-and-ramp-tests/>
- <http://www.bikeradar.com/advice/fitness-and-training/training-zones/#whataretrainingzones>
- <https://www.bikeradar.com/advice/fitness-and-training/cycling-training-plan/>

- https://trainright.com/zone-2-training-to-improve-aerobic-endurance-and-fat-burning/?utm_source=ctsnewsletter&utm_medium=email&inf_contact_key=4bf0326d6cb0dc2c6e960a5d337bcb0a1b0a3f0fd3ee5d9b43fb34c6613498d7

<https://www.howardluksmd.com/zone-2-hr-training-live-longer-less-injury/>

- <https://peterattiamd.com/inigosanmillan/>
- <https://www.trainingpeaks.com/guides/century-training/>
- https://trainright.com/mistakes-cyclists-make-with-apps-and-pre-made-training-plans/?utm_source=ctsnewsletter&utm_medium=email&inf_contact_key=179cd7aef75a492adb1115c971dc25ae1b0a3f0fd3ee5d9b43fb34c6613498d7