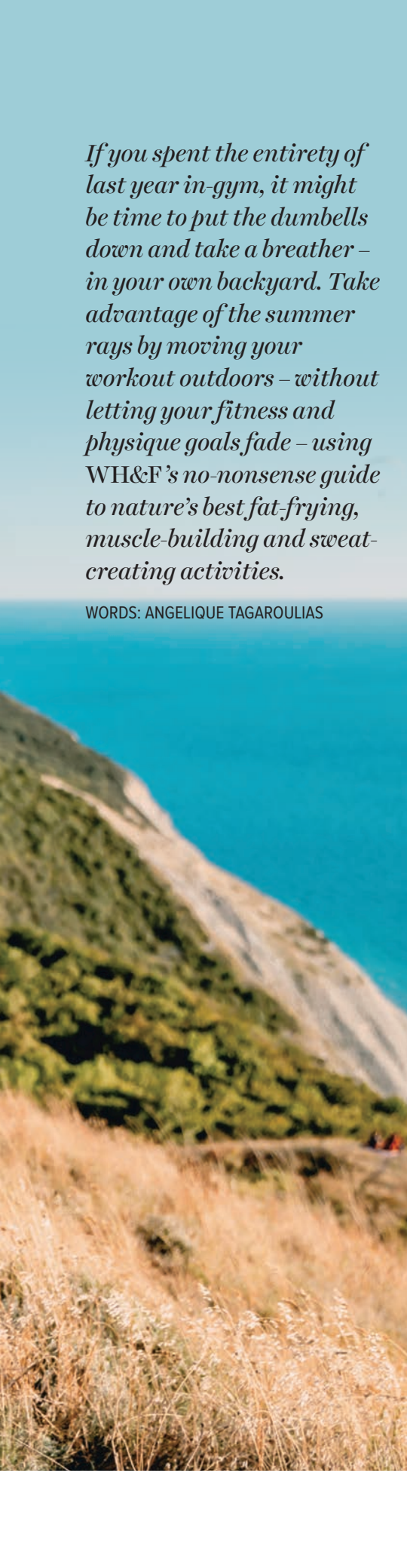


move

Anything But Gym

THE SUMMER EDIT





If you spent the entirety of last year in-gym, it might be time to put the dumbbells down and take a breather – in your own backyard. Take advantage of the summer rays by moving your workout outdoors – without letting your fitness and physique goals fade – using WH&F’s no-nonsense guide to nature’s best fat-frying, muscle-building and sweat-creating activities.

WORDS: ANGELIQUE TAGAROULIAS

Hiking, cycling and running

GOOD FOR

Taking your cardiovascular training outdoors may be the answer to increased motivation and dodging results plateaus according to the latest research.

One study published in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology* found that activities such as hiking, cycling and running in nature have been associated with greater feelings of revitalisation, increased energy, and a reduction in feelings of anger, confusion and depression – meaning you are more likely to make it out the door to work out. Not only will hiking your local trails help to bolster your mental state, but the length of such activities (usually upward of the 45-minute to an hour threshold) means they will improve both cardiovascular fitness and your ability to dip into fat stores.

Muscular endurance, agility, balance and coordination are also improved via a hike thanks to the uneven terrain, says exercise physiologist and exercise scientist Naomi Ferstera (naomiferstera.com). Cycling is another winner for increasing aerobic fitness as you can adjust the level of intensity as you improve to avoid plateau, while running sits your heart rate at about 60 per cent – perfect for fat loss.

“You use primarily your aerobic energy system while running – this energy system uses mainly fat [rather than carbs] as fuel, which means that you burn a lot of fat. The repetitive activity helps you improve your VO2max, which is your cardiovascular fitness and your muscular endurance,” says exercise physiologist and nutritionist Veronika Larisova (eatlikeachief.com).

But before you ditch the treadle for good, be warned: research published in *The Journal of Physiology* found that just three 30-minute sessions of sprint interval training on a bike can be as effective as five one-hour endurance workouts per week in increasing the body’s insulin sensitivity. Improved insulin sensitivity supports the body’s ability to store carbs you eat as muscle

glycogen instead of fat, meaning improved weight maintenance. So if time is a factor for your lifestyle, it might be worth keeping the gym membership on standby.

LIMITATIONS

While muscle endurance can be aided by the odd hike up a hill, serious muscle gains are limited when performing cardio-based activities. Even the most avid professional cyclists still supplement their bike work with gym workouts for a reason. In order to lose fat *and* gain muscle, hypertrophy-focused strength training is necessary.

“My advice to anyone who wants to be fit overall – with good muscle mass and strength, low body fat and solid cardiovascular fitness – is that you need to cover all these components in your training,” says Larisova.

“You can’t gain muscle by running; you need to do specific hypertrophy strength training at the gym, which involves lifting heavy weights to gain muscle and to prevent muscle loss. And to lose fat without losing muscle you need to do different types of running such as sprinting, hill sprints, interval running and short bursts at high intensity. This will also work your anaerobic fitness, lactose threshold and power if done correctly.”

Running also puts a lot of stress on your muscles and joints, with the potential to cause inflammation, premature ageing and shin splints if overdone. Running on softer surfaces, fuelling your body correctly and ensuring adequate recovery time are important for preventing injury. Try alternating your longer runs with lower impact cycling every other day. Focusing on your ankle, hip and knee stability, your core strength, and glute and quad exercises – including single-leg versions – can also help.

“Work on overall body tightness and improve your flexibility with plenty of stretching – if you’re tight you won’t run properly because you won’t have good biomechanics, which then leads to injuries,” says Larisova.

Muscle tightness causes the muscle to shorten, which limits range of motion, while stretching increases the muscle length. Research shows that regular stretching will lead to the muscle being permanently extended, increasing flexibility.

“Long distance running and marathons also create lots of free radicals in your body, which is damaging and causes inflammation and premature ageing,” warns Larisova.

Opt for softer running surfaces such as sand or grass, and avoid concrete, which can lead to overuse injuries, shin splints, stress fractures and damage to your ligaments and tendons if adequate recovery time is not allowed for.

Good nutrition should never be overlooked. In order to maintain muscle despite in the midst of excessive cardio activities, a protein-rich diet high in amino acids is essential according to BioMed Research International. Think lean meat, soybeans and lentils.



TRY

TABATA SPRINTING

OUTDOORS: Sprint as fast as you can for 20 seconds followed by 10 seconds of rest. Repeat 8 times.

“This will work on your fat burning and on improving your cardiovascular fitness by increasing your VO2max but it will not lead to the same level of muscle wastage, such as running a marathon probably would,” says Larisova.

Larisova suggests 2 to 3 strength sessions per week in addition to your 3 to 4 runs, alternating between long, slow jogs and sprints at high intensity, which will help to build muscle.

Personal trainer and owner of Flow Athletic Ben Lucas (flowathletic.com.au) recommends keeping cardio-based cycling to 2 to 3 sessions per week, and

both Lucas and Ferstera encourage supplementing your cardio (whether it be cycling, hiking or running) with resistance training. This will be particularly useful to cyclists’ core strength and posture as they tend to hunch over the bicycle bars.

Combining strength exercises with sprinting around the oval: Complete a 400-metre sprint around an oval (or similar) followed by:

- » 20 x jump lunges
- » 10 x push-ups
- » 20 x sit-ups
- » 10 x full burpees
- » 1-minute plank
- » 1-minute isometric squat against a tree or wall.

Repeat for 30 to 40 minutes for optimal fat loss/fitness results and to hit all key body parts.

Rock climbing

GOOD FOR

The short bursts of high intensity activity followed by even shorter sections of active rest native to rock climbing make it an ideal activity for spiking your heart rate – improving both your fitness and your ability to burn fat post-workout (if you work hard enough). A woman of average height and build can burn around 600 to 700 calories in a one-hour rock climbing sesh, *and* this HIIT-style workout is likely to provide an EPOC (excess post oxygen consumption) or afterburn effect where you continue to expend energy for 12 to 48 hours after you jump off the rocks.

It’s also a full-body workout that will improve muscular strength and endurance, particularly for the upper body, according to Ferstera.

“Every muscle in your body is likely to improve with rock climbing but particularly the type II fibres, which activate under power, speed or heavy loads,” she says.

Type II or fast twitch muscle fibres have larger motor units that control more cells, meaning they’re bigger and contract with greater force. So it’s no surprise they’re working in overdrive to support your entire body while rock climbing.

LIMITATIONS

Rock climbing allows for significant gains in upper body strength but can be unbalanced in terms of the lower body, with your legs playing more of a supporting role. Plateau is also a risk



eventually, particularly if rock climbing is your only training poison of choice.

“As with any exercise, your body adapts to what you’re doing, so you’ll need to keep pushing yourself with harder climbs,” says Ferstera.

“It’s likely you’ll see significant gains in upper body strength but it’ll be more endurance improvements you see in the lower body. Therefore you should think about balancing this out in the gym or by doing other activities such as sprints or HIIT training.”

TRY

Ferstera suggests adding 1 to 3 strength-based training sessions to your rock climbing load per week, to ensure you are working every muscle group. Reps below six and intensity above 85 per cent of your 1RM (one repetition maximum) is optimal. Working on your upper body strength and hand/eye coordination will improve your rock climbing ability, while leg work will ensure physique balance.

“To encourage the use of your lower half and experience balanced growth in your fitness, I suggest matching every rock climbing session (minimum 90 minutes) with a core/leg day, focusing on glute engagement, deep core strength and joint stability,” says trainer and founder of Surf Style Elise Carver (littlebantamhealthandfitness.com.au).

“Include a minimum of 3 cardio sessions per week – 2 of LISS and 1 of HIIT – concentrating on sprint training to improve heart rate recovery and oxygen efficiency.”

Ferstera agrees that interval cardio training will increase aerobic power and endurance, vital to rock climbing. Think bike, cross trainer, stairs and hill sprints.

Kayaking

GOOD FOR

Kayaking is great for cardiovascular fitness, muscular endurance and fat loss. And if you’re injured and need to rest your legs, it’s an ideal aerobic activity to get your heart rate up and maintain cardio fitness without fatiguing your pins. Aerobic activities use fat as the primary source of energy, so it’s great for fat burning too, says Larisova.

According to research published by the US National Institutes of Health, aerobic exercises performed in water can burn approximately 501 calories per hour (for a 90kg person). Water has a greater resistance than air, so working out in water requires more effort than on land, making it a great calorie burner.

LIMITATIONS

This isn’t your pick for muscular hypertrophy; again, you need to lift heavy weights to build lean muscle. Limiting your exercise routine to kayaking only can lead to weakened legs and glutes, lower back issues, shoulder pain and knee injuries because you’re essentially neglecting your lower body.

Posture and technique is critical, says Larisova. “As with any cardio exercise, you need to supplement your kayaking with other strength training including leg work and stretching,” she says.

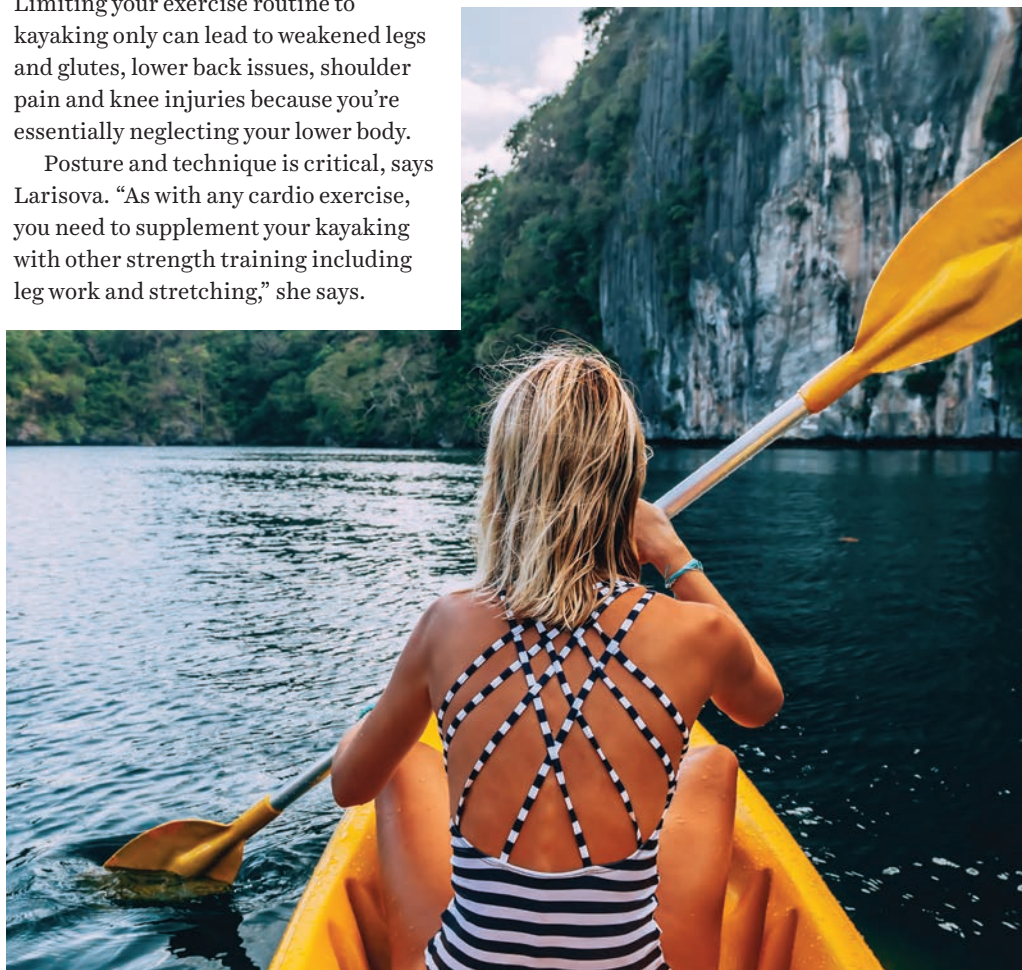
TRY

While kayaking at a moderate pace for an hour observing nature can be relaxing, you need to up the ante for better body composition results.

TRY A KAYAKING TABATA.

“Kayak as fast as you can at 100 per cent for 20 seconds and for 10 seconds sit in the kayak and catch your breath; repeat 8 times. You can also do longer intervals such as 1-minute fast kayak, 30 seconds slow kayak. Or kayak fast to a point (a buoy would work), then kayak slowly back and alternate again with fast and slow,” says Larisova.

“My advice to anyone trying to build muscle and work on their cardiovascular fitness and muscular endurance at the same time is to focus on short bursts of cardiac activity (interval kayaking) and make sure you stretch, release, sleep well, and have adequate nutrition.”





PHOTOGRAPHY: JACK HANNAH

Beach circuit training and boot camps

GOOD FOR

“Circuit training is an excellent way to frame your workouts regardless of whether you are working to time (i.e. 30 seconds on, 10 seconds off) or reps (i.e. 8–12 reps),” says Lucas.

“You can tailor a circuit workout to suit your needs whether you want to work on your heart rate and endurance, or a slower strength-based workout.”

Sand also adds to the resistance, which Lucas says is great for your core, thighs and glutes – hello, booty. The unusual surface also helps with stability and is lower impact than running and sprinting on regular ground. Plus, with an array of exercise and timing options, you won’t get bored. Win, win, win.

Once a form of military entry training, outdoor boot camps typically involve a mix of bodyweight exercises, interval training and strength training in a group fitness environment – a good way to cover all fitness goals. Outdoor boot camps also help you to continuously progress and see results due to the variety of exercises and intensities involved.

For beginners, bodyweight exercises will likely produce some muscle gains, but for the more advanced you can add equipment such as kettlebells and

resistance bands to allow for heavier loads and progression.

LIMITATIONS

The potential to improve all areas of your fitness and physique skyrocket given your ability to adjust the workout to your goal: want to lose fat? Keep the cardio exercises at high intensity with limited rest. Want to gain muscle? Add moderately weighted resistance exercise into the mix and increase your rest times between movements. Think time under tension – slow and steady movements to ensure the muscles are under load for longer periods of time, maximising ‘tone’.

That said, the high intensity and fast-paced nature of circuits can cause injury – particularly if overtraining and poor technique are a factor, warns Ferstera. Recovery sessions and a balanced training regimen, again, are important.

“Mixing up the type of activities you do in your boot camps means you’re likely to continue to see improvements. Most people who are stuck in a plateau and then have a rest from their training often find their plateau ends after their rest,” says Ferstera.

“Plus, when you’re enjoying what you’re doing, you’re more likely to keep going and push yourself harder.”

TRY

Doing what you enjoy seems to be the best strategy for success when it comes to getting your recommended 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. A study published in the journal *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* found that among two groups of people – one that did HIIT and the other longer moderate-intensity exercise – those who did moderate-intensity exercise compared to high-intensity reported greater pleasure and enjoyment, and felt more likely to keep it up.

If circuit training on the beach is your pick, Lucas recommends 3 to 4 workouts per week at 30 to 40 minutes in duration, supplemented with low-intensity steady-state cardio such as walking and yoga.

Try the following exercises, completing:

- » 10 reps
- » Repeat for 3 rounds
- » 30 seconds' rest between rounds

1. lateral lunges
2. squat jumps
3. push-ups
4. 20 metre shuttle sprints (use towels or cones as markers and set them out 20 metres apart)

“Training on the sand can cause lactic acid to build up in the legs, so you want to flush it out. Lighter exercise will ensure your muscles have a chance to recover, and will also keep your cortisol and inflammation levels in check,” he says.

Surfing and swimming

GOOD FOR

The movements involved in swimming and surfing – such as paddling, duck diving and breathing at various paces – makes them excellent activities for improving cardio fitness.

When you exercise regularly at your maximum heart rate (also termed your V02max), your heart muscle becomes more efficient at pumping oxygenated blood through your body, improving your fitness. Swimming laps vigorously will raise your heart rate and keep it there – particularly the taxing butterfly stroke.

Your body's consistent push against the resistance of the water means surfing and swimming can also build full body muscular endurance if performed regularly enough, says Carver. Hence the post-surfing leg burn, as you are forced to control the board through constant muscle engagement.

Water also acts as a cushion for your joints, reducing stress on muscles, tendons and ligaments.

LIMITATIONS

While surfing and swimming movements challenge muscular endurance, Carver says it won't do much for muscular definition. Unlike bodybuilders, surfers don't focus on isolated muscles – their whole body must work as one unit to move through the waves and, in the end, load (and progressive overload needed to build muscle) is limited. While perfect for improving stability and balance that can translate to your key lifts, it won't do so much for creating sharp curves.

TRY

Carver suggests doing a minimum of 4 strength-building sessions per week. Pick 5 to 8 exercises that focus on two body parts per session. For example, core and legs, core and glutes, core and postural strength or core and balance/joint stability.

"You want to build lean, pliable muscle and tone to complement your surfing/swimming by being light in the water while still strong. Add weights to all movements that you can hold with correct technique, starting at a weight just inside your comfort zone for you to complete 3 sets of 15 repetitions," she says.

"Start low at a manageable level and increase the weight when you begin to find completing 3x20 repetitions of the exercise quite easy. Follow this method, beginning at 3x15 repetitions again for each weight increase, then increase your repetitions to 3x20 again once 3x15 is easy." ■



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