



# Ride the Tour

On 20th July, 10,000 amateur cyclists will take on L'Étape du Tour, a Pyrénées stage of the 2014 Tour de France. You could join them, with the help of Tim Pigott's six-month masterplan



THE KEY CHALLENGE with the Etape is not so much the distance, which is akin to many British sportives, but the climbing, which is long and relentless. In the Pyrénées you can be climbing for an hour or longer, and you'll find nothing like that in the UK.

You've got to get used to being in the saddle and pushing down hard for an hour or longer. It will be hot, too, because this is Southern France in mid-July. Then there's the pacing issue: 10,000-plus riders take part, and there can be hundreds in a single peloton, on closed roads with really slick surfaces. So it's difficult not to get carried along too fast, and burn out early on.

You need to get some base training in from mid-winter onwards, and my six-month plan (see right) builds in four phases: preparation; base conditioning; endurance/threshold training; then tapering for the event. The programme pivots on two or three weekday rides and a long one at the weekend, but it's important to focus your training, not just slog out lots of miles.

Cadence drills are key: on the hills in the Etape, you want to be tapping out 85-95rpm, which is a steady grind on the bike. Sounds okay, but since the most efficient work rate is 50-70% of your maximum cadence, you need to be stretching yourself in training to double that: aim to build to 160rpm, and to hold that for a good 10 seconds at a time.



## MEET TIM PIGOTT

Tim is a physiotherapist, triathlon coach and Retül bike fitter. Find out more at his website: [hp-3.co.uk](http://hp-3.co.uk)

The second session to work on is threshold tolerance. On the big climbs you need to be comfortable sitting at moderately hard effort for a long time; so in training, aim to be riding at your threshold or just below it for up to 30 minutes, rising to 60 minutes as your fitness improves. That means two 30-minute bursts at 80% of maximum effort, building your VO2 threshold tolerance.

And you should also do a core workout a couple of times a week: join a pilates class, or find a basic resistance workout that suits you.

Most important of all is the long ride: aim to get out for two hours at a time, building to four or five hours as the Etape approaches. Get used to riding a steady pace, feeling fairly easy, for a long time. It's impossible to find hills that simulate the Etape in Britain, but a good tip is to use the wind. The Dutch make very good climbers, because they're used to battling the wind, and it forces you to make a constant effort, rather than the ups and downs of typical British roads. So ride out into a headwind for a couple of hours, then let the wind push you home again.

## TIM'S TOP TIPS FOR THE ETAPE

 **Prepare your tools:** Book your bike a full service; and get yourself a bike fit and a musculo-skeletal injury-prevention screening, to pick up any imbalances in your posture or riding style.

 **Set some goals:** It could be about riding for five hours in the saddle; or maybe you need to up your hill-climbing ability.

 **Keep a training diary:** It could be on paper or on an Excel spreadsheet: it's good for motivation, and you can monitor how your fitness is improving.

 **Consider your set-up:** If you need an easier gear for the climbs, consider fitting a climbing cassette with 11 speeds. Aim to be climbing seated, not standing. Get comfy sitting on the drops, too, especially for descending: you've a lower centre of gravity and you'll be more stable on the bilke that way.

# ETAPE DU TOUR: THE SIX-MONTH TRAINING PLAN

## PHASE 1: PREPARATION 3-4 rides per week, 2 core/mobility sessions

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
JAN-FEB	<b>Recovery ride</b> Easy 30-60 mins in small chain ring <b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	<b>Skills ride: cadence</b> Warm-up 10 mins Start @ 80rpm, build by 5rpm each min to 110rpm, then back down. Repeat x 3-5. Cool down 10 mins	<b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	Rest Day	<b>Skills ride: threshold</b> Warm-up 10 mins 20 mins hard, 5 mins recovery. Repeat x 2-3. Cool down 10 mins	<b>Easy ride</b> 2 hours in small chain ring only	<b>Long ride</b> 2-4 hours with negative split. small chain ring first half, large chain ring second half.

## PHASE 2: BASE CONDITIONING 4 rides per week, 2 core/mobility sessions

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
MAR-APR	<b>Recovery ride</b> Easy 30-60 mins SCR <b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	<b>Skills ride: strength</b> Warm-up 10 mins Climbing 8 mins in hardest gear at 50-60RPM. 2 mins recovery between each. Repeat x 6-8 Cool down 10 mins	<b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	Rest Day	<b>Skills ride: threshold</b> Warm-up 10 mins Then 40 mins hard (80-85% of maximum effort). Cool down 10 mins	<b>Easy ride</b> 2-3hrs with negative split. small chain ring first half, large chain ring second half	<b>Long ride</b> 3-4 hours. Include 3 x 30-min moderate-hard efforts

## PHASE 3: ENDURANCE/THRESHOLD TRAINING 4-5 rides per week, 2-3 core/mobility sessions

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
MAY-JUN	<b>Recovery ride</b> Easy 60 mins with spin-ups to max cadence - hold for as long as possible. <b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	<b>Skills ride: strength</b> Warm-up 10 mins Hill climbing 3 mins standing, 3 mins seated, 3 mins easy back down Repeat x 6 Cool down 10 mins	<b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	Rest Day	<b>Skills ride: threshold</b> Warm-up 10 mins Then 10 mins hard, 5 mins moderate Repeat x 4-6 Cool down 10 mins	<b>Easy ride</b> 3 hours	<b>Long ride</b> 4-5 hours. Include 5 x 30-min hard efforts, with 10-min recovery

## PHASE 4: TAPER 4 rides per week, 2 core/mobility sessions

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
JULY	<b>Recovery spin</b> 45-60 mins spin-ups. <b>Core/Mobility workout</b>	<b>Skills ride: strength</b> Warm-up 10 mins 3 mins hard, 90 secs recovery Repeat x 8-10 Cool down 10 mins	<b>Core/mobility workout</b>	Rest Day	<b>Skills ride: threshold</b> Warm-up 10 mins 5 x 6 miles tempo with 10 mins spin recovery  or 3 x 12 miles with 15 mins recovery. Cool down 10 mins	<b>Easy ride</b> 2-3 hours	<b>Long ride</b> 3 hours. Set up as you will at start of the event (in terms of kit, nutrition etc).