

## 11. OMG! NOT SOFT SAND!

Yes, it's got delicious, soft, sinky, hot, moving, golden sand; lots of it!

The Wild Women On Top Sydney Coastrek is a celebration of the stunning Coastline of Sydney and an opportunity for us to increase our health and fitness. We experience the beaches, headlands, ocean, rocky cliffs, bush tracks and the soft golden sand.

Our carefully selected route provides the safest and most scenic tracks to keep you connected to the coast as much as possible for the 100 kilometre route.

The first 50k of Coastrek is approximately 25% soft sand, 55% bush tracks and 20% hard surfaces. The second 50k is approximately 50% hard surfaces and 50% bush tracks. Soft sand and hills provide the challenges in the first 50 kilometres while hard concrete is the challenge of the last 50 kilometers.

This is great news for those of us who want to burn calories and fat. Walking on soft sand increases caloric expenditure up to 100% if you can keep up the pace. It's been estimated that walking 3-4 kilometres an hour in soft sand is equivalent to walking about 6 – 7 kilometres an hour on flat pavement.

If you burn 200 calories per hour walking on the footpath, you'll burn up to 400 calories an hour on soft sand. Of course this depends on how fast you go; how soft is soft; how much you weigh; how heavy your backpack is and how sloping the beach is, but you get the picture.

Research on the "Mechanics and energetics of human locomotion on sand" showed that walking on sand requires 1.6-2.5 times more mechanical work than does walking on a hard surface at the same speed. This study also found that walking on sand requires 2.1-2.7 times more energy expenditure than does walking on a hard surface at the same speed. (T M Lejeune, P A Willems and N C Heglund from the *Université catholique de Louvain, Place P. de Coubertin, Belgium*)

In training, you want to burn fat and increase your fitness and strength so you should aim to get your heart rate up on the soft sand and really give yourself a workout. However, during Coastrek, you want to conserve energy so that you can last the distance of 50 – 100 kilometres so you might want to adjust your pace on the soft sand.

If you find the soft sand is torture for you, just slow

down. Treat the soft sand like a hill climb. In training, go for the increased heart rate to improve your fitness. But during the event, relax, listen to your body, and slow down on the soft sand to reduce the stress on your body and conserve energy for the long distance.

Walking soft sand is great training because your muscles work harder to lift your legs out and to propel you forward on each step as you're sinking backwards. This extra effort translates into extra muscle strengthening; an increase in cardiovascular fitness plus extra fat and calories burned.

Soft sand walking is also good for your core muscles (your abs, buttocks and back), because your body has to work to stay stable as the sand moves underneath you.

Walking soft sand is also easier on your joints because it's less jarring and allows the body to move in a greater range of motion. However, there can be some risks for injury, particularly if you're overweight; deconditioned, going too fast or walking on sloping sand.

Think about your technique and focus on tipping your weight slightly more forward and pushing the ball of your foot into the sand, rather than your heel. Soft sand will give your calf muscles a greater stretch and therefore a greater workout, so take care if you have achilles tendon issues.

If you are recovering from a leg or foot injury, do not walk on sand. The uneven surface poses too great a risk for muscle strains or other injuries. Wait until you are completely healed before heading to the beach.

Here are **8 helpful tips** to ensure you are successful when walking on the soft sand:

1. **Warm-up/Cool-down** A five minute warm-up for walking and cool down afterwards is recommended for preventing strains and sprains.
2. **Shoes.** During Coastrek, we recommend you wear Trail runners for the first 50k. A good pair of Trail runners will keep your feet ventilated, supported and protected. However, if you're injury free, spend some time exercising the intrinsic muscles of your feet by walking soft sand bare foot.
3. **Technique.** Focus on walking with good posture, using your core muscles and avoid over stretching as you sink into the sand.
4. **Direction.** Beaches have a natural slope to

them. This will put strain on one leg more than the other. To compensate for this, spend half your time walking in one direction, then turn around and walk in the other direction to avoid over-straining one leg.

**5. Frequency.** Soft sand walking is high intensity so don't overdo it. Build up gradually over time, starting with short distances and working up to longer distance. Mix beach walking into your walking routine two or three times a week.

**6. Pace.** Keep a brisk pace, but don't push yourself to walk too quickly. Remember that you're burning extra calories just by walking on sand so walk at a comfortable pace to keep your balance and avoid injury.

**7. Protection.** Always wear sunscreen, a hat, a light white cotton shirt to cover your skin in the sun, a wet bandana to keep your neck cool and ensure you're well hydrated. And don't forget your ankle cuffs to keep the sand from flicking in the top of your shoes 😊

**8. Poles.** Use trekking poles for an allover workout including the upper body. Push off the poles to work the triceps and take pressure off the hips. Make sure you wipe your poles after sand walking because the salt and sand will damage the poles.

Soft sand walking is a winner and a killer at the same time. Use it to increase your fitness in a time efficient way, but make sure you adapt your pace so that you achieve your Sydney Coastrek goal of finishing the distance injury free.

For an entertaining take on Sand Walking: a killer workout, check out a post by Kathryn Lilley <http://killerhobbies.blogspot.com.au/2007/06/sand-walking-killer-workout.html>

### ***Sand walking: a killer workout***

Oh. My. God.

I discovered sand walking this week. *Talk* about a killer workout.

Before sand walking, I was doing brisk-but-not-brutal walks along the boardwalk by the Pacific Ocean, five mornings a week.

I usually set off on my walk around six a.m. This is a time of day when only die-hard joggers, dog walkers and the occasional urban wastrel<sup>fff</sup> can be found along the beaches of my Southern California city.

Each morning, I set out from my house and head down the hill toward the sea. Ten minutes later I hit the Strand, a cement pathway that parallels the

shore. I pump my arms, striding vigorously. I feel

virtuous. My forward-canted pace is bouncy with the belief that today, I will wrestle my demons-of-the-flesh to earth. Today, I *will* take control of my body.

But no matter how hard I push my heel-toe cadence, rocking along to my Jenny Craig walking tapes, I can't seem to boost my heart rate into the fat burning zone.

And I can't lose weight.

I've read that this is because your body "adjusts" to a workout. (I say, if your body "adjusts" to a workout, why can't it "adjust" to overeating, and not put on pounds?)

So I've been looking for a way to shake up my routine. And then, last week, I looked west toward the Pacific Ocean. And saw: The Sand.

*I'll just walk on the sand*, I thought. *Maybe that will be different.* I stepped into the Sand Zone.

And yes, sand walking *was* different. Sand walking was so different that five minutes later, I was beet-faced and gasping for breath. After only five minutes, I had to retreat back to the Strand, sucking in air like a stressed-out puffer fish.

Understand that I'm not talking about walking on the wet, hard-packed sand by the water, where you can dangle your flip-flops from your pinkie finger while you stroll along the surf, looking sexy. I'm talking the killer white, uneven, fluffy stuff. Try looking sexy walking across *that*.

I did a little research and discovered that when you walk on sand, your caloric output increases by as much as fifty percent.

And my scales have noticed the difference. I lost two pounds this week, without changing what I eat. Hallelujah!

Now, if only I could write sand walking into my second mystery, *A KILLER WORKOUT*, which is coming out in 2008. But that story is set in the Great Smoky Mountains, which are short on beaches.

However, they do have cliffs, where you have to *really* watch your step.

Mountain climbing as aerobic activity. Hmm...I'll have to try that and report back.

Posted by Kathryn Lilley

<http://killerhobbies.blogspot.com.au/2007/06/sand-walking-killer-workout.html>