Graduate March Back Survival Guide
This information is based on previous march backs and is subject to change

You should not participate in the Graduate march back if you are not physically fit. If you are out of shape or if you have medical concerns, you should not participate.

For Graduates, there are two options to participate in the march back:

**Option 1 - March from Camp Buckner (total distance is approximately 12 miles)**

You will face two major challenges. First is a lack of sleep due to the very early departure time. Make sure you are well rested before you arrive. Second is the terrain, which is a series of rocky paths, mostly uphill, some downhill, but all challenging. **You need to be physically fit.**

The distance from Camp Buckner to the Ski Slope is approximately 10 miles. The rate of march is 20 minutes per mile. It takes about 3.5 hours to complete and will begin before daybreak.

Graduates are placed evenly throughout the New Cadet Companies. You will be assigned a specific platoon and company. You will stay with this platoon during the entire march to the ski slope.

This portion of the march is usually divided into three segments (with two breaks, approximately 5-10 minutes each). There are snacks, water, and porta-johns at each break. **It is very important to keep yourself hydrated throughout the march.**

1) The first segment is the most difficult. It is about three miles on rough and narrow gravel roads and mostly uphill. The cadets (with full military pack and weapons) walk at a brisk pace. It is a true test of your physical conditioning.

2) The second segment is also on gravel roads and is continually and steeply up and down like a roller coaster. It is difficult, but not as tough as the first segment. This segment normally ends at Round Pond.

3) The third segment is the easiest and is mostly on asphalt on either downhill or level terrain. The last mile is through the golf course ending at the ski slope. When you reach the base of the Ski Slope, the Cadets and Graduates will part company. Graduates assemble and rest in the Class of 1948 Ski Lodge.

**Option 2 - March from the Ski Slope (total distance is 2 miles)**

Graduates are bused from Buffalo Soldier Field to the Class of 1948 Ski Lodge to link-up with the other Graduates who completed the march from Camp Buckner.

Graduates will march in formation behind the New Cadet Companies. This portion of the march is mostly downhill or flat and takes about 30 minutes to complete.
A suggested training program for those marching back from Camp Buckner

1. You should begin training at least three months out. You must feel confident in your ability to walk a long distance, with limited visibility, under challenging environmental and terrain conditions.

2. Start out with a distance you can easily handle with at least three sessions per week. Increase one or two of your sessions by a mile each week until you feel you can handle a 12 mile hike with ease. On the days you aren’t walking, do some other aerobic exercise.

3. You must be able to go up and down steep inclines at a brisk pace, so include hilly terrain in your routes. If you live in flat country, consider using stairwells or sports stadium bleachers. All you need is one hill or set of stairs – just repeat it, a lot!

4. Plan a day of rest after your longest walk of the week. Try not to get over-fatigued, which could lead to illness or injury. If you find yourself overtired and irritable, you are probably training too hard. Intersperse more rest days or slow your pace.

5. Get exposure to walking in the dark or early morning. Ensure you wear reflective gear.

6. Train on a rocky and hilly trail that you can do repeated treks over – this will help for the rough surfaces you’ll face in the dark during the first portion of the march back.

7. A suggested training plan for the first week is below. Add a mile or 30 minutes to your plan each week until you reach 12 miles.

   Sunday  1 mile Walk
   Monday  Rest Day
   Tuesday 1 Hour Walk
   Wednesday Rest Day
   Thursday 3 mile Walk
   Friday  Rest Day
   Saturday Other Aerobic Exercise

8. By 1 August, you should feel confident that you can walk at least 12 miles (at a 20 minute per mile rate of march) over hilly terrain and varied surfaces with only a couple of short breaks.
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Suggested personal equipment and supplies

1. Hiking Boots/Shoes: Your single most important item. Don’t wear running shoes. Recommend you wear a hiking boot that supports your ankle to reduce the chances of an ankle sprain. Make sure they fit well with a heavyweight sock. Buy them early, so you can break them in well. Spray your boots/shoes with waterproofing before the march back.

2. Hiking Pole(s): Some Graduates use a hiking pole(s). They add extra stability when walking over loose rock or sandy surfaces, especially at night. If you use a hiking pole(s), be conscious of where you place the tip(s) – you don’t want to hit another marcher’s foot or leg!

3. Hiking Socks: Recommend a cushioned sock that wicks moisture. Make sure you carry an extra pair during the march.

4. Back Pack: A small/light back pack is recommended to carry water, extra socks, a rain jacket, foot powder, band aids, etc.

5. Hydration: The Academy will issue you a water bottle; however, it is strongly recommended that you bring your own hydration system that can be carried in your backpack or in a waist belt.

6. Uniform: All Graduates will march in the shirt and hat issued at registration. Graduates will have to purchase a pair of shorts or pants for the march. The Academy will announce the color of the shorts or pants. There are no exceptions to this uniform!

SAFETY

Physical Fitness - You should not participate in the Graduate March Back if you are not physically fit. If you are out of shape or if you have medical concerns do not register for this event!

Water – Make sure you keep yourself well hydrated during the march. We will issue each Graduate/marcher one water bottle that you can refill during the march. However, we recommend that everyone bring a Camelbak or other hydration device.

Sleep - Please remember that you will get a limited amount of sleep on Sunday night and you are participating in a long march over difficult terrain. As a result, you will be very tired on Monday afternoon. Therefore, plan to have someone else drive you home or to the airport or please make arrangements to stay another night.