

ACC OTTAWA SECTION HIKING, SKI TOURING & SNOWSHOEING LEVELS

Level	Length	Elevation Gain	Time	Description
Level 1	Less than 6 km	Less than 100 m	Up to 3 hours	• rolling terrain, established primary or secondary trails
Level 2	Less than 9 km	Less than 200 m	Up to 4 hours	• rolling terrain, established primary or secondary trails
Level 3	Up to 12 km	Up to 400 m	5 to 6 hours,	• A mix of established trails and some backcountry paths, may involve some bushwhacking.
Level 4	Up to 15 km	Up to 600 m	Up to 8 hours.	• Generally travel over rough ground, steep sections, faint trails (Tertiary) bushwhacking or Level 3 at faster pace and with fewer breaks
Level 5	Up to 20 km	Up to 1,000 m	Up to 10 hours	• Rough and/or steep terrain, bushwhacking and/or primitive trails and strenuous elevation gain or Level 4 at fast pace
Level 6	Up to 25 km	Up to 2,000+ m	Over 10 hours	• Very rough or steep terrain. Very strenuous elevation gain or Level 5 at very fast and sustained pace.

Notes

1. Trip ratings should allow participants to self-assess trip suitability for their personal goals and ability level.
2. The scale is approximate as many variables are involved i.e. required fitness and expertise level, terrain roughness, elevation gain/loss, completion time, weight of pack to be carried, remoteness, navigation complexity, hazard exposure, length.
3. Some rating factors are variable. Adverse developments during a trip can significantly increase objective hazards, trip completion time and effectively raise the difficulty level. Examples include adverse weather conditions (i.e. precipitation, wind, fog or low cloud), health or fitness problems or injuries (particularly leg or foot) and equipment failure (i.e. ski or snowshoe bindings).
4. For hiking and backpacking, security of footing is a major consideration which can be altered by rain, ice, snow, mud, vegetation. In winter, snow conditions are the major determinant. These are highly variable (depth, icy, breakable crust, prior tracks). Other factors include equipment robustness (touring vs. telemark gear), terrain steepness, vegetation density and avalanche hazard.

5. Ski touring does not necessarily require proficiency in the telemark style.
6. Example trips above are for hiking and back packing. Ski touring or snowshoeing in the same terrain may have a different rating.
7. Select trips within your current capabilities. See Trip Participant Guidelines.
8. You are responsible for your own safety at all times.
9. Trail definitions
 - a. Primary = NCC & ADK Trails
 - b. Secondary = Clearly established paths, well worn or well marked
 - c. Tertiary = Faint path, mixed visibility on ground or irregular frequency of markings
 - d. Primitive = Bushwhacking or deer track.
10. Most local hikes in the Gattineau Park would fit into the class of Levels 1 through 3
11. A few hikes in the Gattineau Park such as the Traverse and the North-South Trek would be classified as Level 4 or 5
12. Most hikes in the Adirondaks would be classified as Level 4 or 5
13. Some long traverse hikes like the Great Range in the ADKs and most hikes in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Canadian Rockies would usually be in the Level 5 & 6 category

Is this the right hike for you?

The Club organizes hikes suited to a wide range of skill and fitness levels. Through the season, we work hard to make sure there are lots of hiking opportunities for everyone.

If you are new to the Club, or to hiking, it is important that you are familiar with our hiking ratings. Heading off on a hike that is beyond your fitness or skill level is not safe, and it will have a negative impact on everyone else in the group. If you are not sure if a hike is right for you, contact the hike leader by e-mail or phone, and talk about it. Also consider participating in some of the beginner or easy hikes first, to get an idea of how our ratings work.

Note that for hikes rated Level 3 or higher, participation requires the approval of the trip leader. If you register for one of these hikes, and the leader is not familiar with your capabilities, they will contact you before accepting your registration.

Why do some hikes have limits on the number of participants?

For all of our hikes, the Club's goal is that members have fun and be safe. Depending on the specific hike, this can mean setting a limit on how many members can participate. Our volunteer

leaders set these limits based on their experience, knowledge of the route and judgment about how large the group can be to complete the hike, have a great day, and stay safe. That's why it is important for members to register for hikes early, rather than just showing up at the meeting place and hoping there is still room.

However, if members register early enough and there are sufficient number of hikers the leader will attempt to arrange two hikes with different routes and different Levels.

