

## Trail Ratings/Suggested Hiker Rating

Hikes in the newsletter are rated by level number, mileage and sometimes other descriptions. On the first page of the Hilltop Happenings newsletter is a trail ratings key. For each level it first rates the trail and after the slash it rates the hiker. The hiker rating assesses the hike based on the skills needed to accomplish the hike.

**Pace** for hikes varies depending on the ease or difficulty of the trail. Average pace is 3 miles per hour (or 20-minute mile). Easier hikes (Level 1 and Level 2) may only take 1 ½ to 1 ¾ hours to complete. Difficult hikes usually take longer.

<b>Level 1 – Easy/Beginner</b>	The hike is easy and for a beginner hiker.
	<b>Easy Trail</b> – paved or flat with few obstructions and mostly level.
	<b>Beginner Hiker</b> – a new hiker just starting out should be able to walk a Level 1 trail. Generally suitable for anyone who enjoys walking. Hikers will need to learn the location of the trailheads and how to dress for heat, cold and rain. Don't forget to bring water.
<b>Level 2 – Moderate Easy/Novice</b>	The hike is for someone who has been hiking for a while and who may want a bit of a challenge.
	<b>Moderate Easy Trail</b> – surfaces can be gravel, crushed limestone, or dirt. Slopes are not very steep or long.
	<b>Novice Hiker</b> – be able to walk up slight inclines without slowing your pace. Navigate through or around mud and puddles, climb over or go around downed trees or other obstructions across the trail. Work on your hiking pace to keep up with the group.
<b>Level 3 – Moderate/Intermediate</b>	Anyone who has developed intermediate hiking skills and some physical stamina should be comfortable tackling a level 3 hike. It will be challenging for an unconditioned person.
	<b>Moderate Trail</b> – includes rocks, roots, mud, easy water crossings, and steps. Terrain will involve a steady and often steep incline, enough to stress the body and raise the heart rate.
	<b>Intermediate Hiker</b> – Ability to hike on rocks, stream crossing, slippery surfaces such as mud or wet rocks. Proper hiking footwear is needed for these trails. Develop good safety practices – water, sunscreen, insect repellent, appropriate clothing, footwear, and snacks.
<b>Level 4 – Difficult/Advanced</b>	A Level 4 trail will challenge most hikers.
	<b>Difficult Trail</b> – includes many hills, rocks, roots, mud, water crossings and steps. The hike will generally be longer and steeper or may be strenuous because of elevation gain.

	<p><b>Advanced Hiker</b> – needs to be in shape and able to traverse ever changing trail surfaces (clay becomes slippery when wet). Ability to climb over or go around trail obstacles. Learn the proper way to hike up and down steep hills. Paces may slow for difficult trail conditions. Hikers at this level should pay attention to where they are hiking and what direction they are going. Hiking boots are expected. Other equipment, such as trekking poles and daypacks become more important.</p>
<p><b>Level 5 – Strenuous/Expert</b></p>	<p>Only well-conditioned and well-prepared hikers should attempt very strenuous hikes. Expert hikers have been hiking for a long time, challenging themselves at each hiking level.</p>
	<p><b>Strenuous Trail</b> – can be treacherous. Long and steep climbs up or down. Long sets of steps that stress hips, knees, and ankles. May include rock scrambles, deep stream crossings, and other challenging terrain.</p>
	<p><b>Expert Hiker</b> – Talus and boulder hiking skills are used. Need deep water crossings skills. Rock scrambling with some requiring the use of hands. Hikers should be able to follow trail maps/apps and know what to do if they get lost. Hikers should know basic first aid in case of injury. Proper equipment, clothing, water, food, first aid kit, and more extensive supplies should be carried on these hikes</p>