

SVM Hike Difficulty Rating System

Our hiking committee has created a rating system for our hikes and Daycations that rates the difficulty of the event on a scale from Easy to Strenuous. Most Daycations are rated Easy. If people are interested in knowing how difficult a hike is please look up the hike in this book and then refer to this rating system to help them decide if they are able to attend the event. (This is particularly the case for the Rim Hikes as some, though short in distance, are very strenuous.)

Easy: The hike is mostly level with easy hills mixed in and the walking is relatively smooth. You can certainly expect tree roots, small rocks, and things of that sort on any trail walk but for hikes rated as "easy" there won't be any big-step-up boulders to get past and no rock scrambling.

If a hike is long and flat, it will likely get a rating of "easy" in spite of its long distance. If a hike is short but has more than minimal elevation gain, it can also be rated as "easy" due to the overall level of the hike. i.e. If a big hill only accounts for a tenth of a mile of a hike, then it's probably something that people accustomed to walking on flat terrain can handle.

Easy hikes are generally suitable for anyone that enjoys walking. Just remember to choose an easy hike with a distance that you can comfortably handle.

Easy/Moderate: This rating typically describes hikes that are not flat but whose elevation gain is less than 500 feet per mile. For an easy/moderate hike, you should definitely be prepared for a lot of uphill walking. Overall the uphill will be on the gentle side but there may be some short steeper sections.

Moderate: Hikes rated as "moderate" usually gain 500-800 feet per mile. Moderate hikes usually ascend steadily at an incline that would be difficult for an unconditioned person to comfortably handle. Hikes are up to 8 miles round trip. Moderate hikes are generally on established trails that can be rocky and steep in places. Elevation gain is up to 2000'.

Difficult: This level is used for challenging hikes. Perhaps the *average* elevation gain falls within the criteria for "moderate" but there are enough steeper sections or rough segments to warrant a higher rating. This may also describe hikes that are quite steep but short enough in distance to give it an overall feel of something less than "strenuous". Hikes may be on poorly defined trails or include off-trail sections, be unusually rough or dangerous, or encounter unexpected obstacles.

This category is for experienced hikers in good physical condition. Because of poorly defined trails or off-trail situations, it is important that hikers on hard hikes stay together for safety reasons, so those attending must be capable of keeping up with the group and going the whole distance.

Strenuous: Hike may be especially long, have a large elevation gain, or is over difficult and/or exposed terrain. The hike is clearly difficult with steep inclines and often rough footing and/or rock scrambles. The elevation gain is usually greater than 800 feet per mile and is oftentimes 1,000 feet or more per mile (which is very steep). Particularly for Rim Hikes, a strenuous hike may include some or lots of bushwhacking.