

Fitness Guide

All of Exodus Travels' tours have an 'Activity Level' icon as guides to the type of itinerary and level of challenge one can expect to encounter while travelling on our holidays. The information below will give you an explanation of what each Activity Level means so you can make sure you find the right trip for you.

The Walking & Trekking, Cycling Holidays and Winter Adventures have category specific guidelines, whereas all other trips (Culture, Wildlife, Family & Mixed-Activity) are covered by our General Activity Levels.

General Activity Levels

All of the itineraries have been graded to help you find the comfort level that best suits you:



Activity level 1: Leisurely

Designed for people who are in good health, enjoy the outdoors and want a relaxing trip packed with interest.



Activity level 3: Moderate

Requires a spirit of adventure and some fitness, as the trip may involve more activities or longer journeys.



Activity level 5: Challenging

Fitness is imperative at this level, as the environment may be more remote and challenging.



Activity level 7: Tough

At this level we recommend previous experience of the activity involved.

Split grades

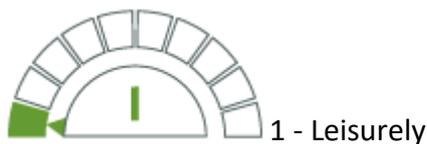
In order to provide more accuracy, where a trip falls between two grades we use an intermediate or 'split' grade, for example; Level 2 (Leisurely/Moderate).

Walking & Trekking Activity Levels

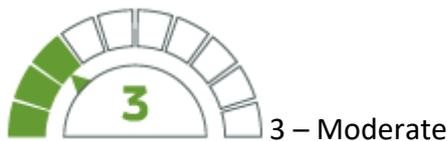
When grading a trip the following factors are considered:

- Length of trek and walking day
- Trail conditions underfoot
- Level of portage and support
- Average altitude, maximum altitude and average gain/loss per day
- Likely prevailing weather conditions and temperature range
- Remoteness of local services and general level of comfort

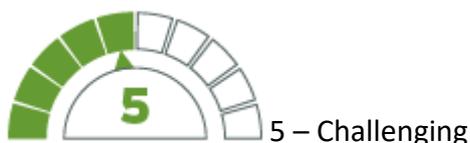
All of our itineraries have been graded to help you find the comfort level that best suits you:



Experience is not necessary; anyone fit and healthy enough to complete a weekend walk can manage a Leisurely, Level 1 departure. Walks are often optional; but trails are seldom flat, so expect a reasonable amount of ascent and descent. You would normally walk for two to five hours during the day and daily ascents will likely be around 300m to 500m, perhaps with the odd day ascending around 600m.



These Moderate, Level 3 departures are either fairly easy medium-duration walks or harder, shorter walks. No experience is necessary, but good health and reasonable fitness are important. Some walking at higher altitude and occasional longer/harder days may be involved, but general underfoot conditions will be fair. A walking day is normally five to seven hours and daily ascents will likely be around 500m to 800m, perhaps with the odd day ascending around 900m to 1000m.



Fitness is important at this grade, which compares to extended walking in mountainous terrain such as the Lakes or Snowdonia. High altitudes, climate and remoteness can also play a part. Previous trekking experience is desirable, but not vital if you are confident of your physical condition. Walking days are usually between six and eight hours, although

they may be longer for passes or peaks. Daily ascents will likely be around 900m to 1000m, perhaps with the odd day ascending around 1100m to 1200m.



We recommend previous trekking experience, preferably at altitude, at this level. You need complete confidence in your ability to trek for many days over difficult terrain. Extremes of altitude and weather may be encountered, as may the use of ice axes and crampons. Stamina is essential as walking days last six to nine hours or more on occasional days and daily ascents will likely be around 900m to 1000m, perhaps with the odd day ascending around 1100m to 1200m.



A Level 9 tour combines all the elements of our Level 7, tough itineraries, but includes climbing a glaciated mountain peak. Specialist equipment, like ice axes and crampons will be needed and you should have experience of them. Please check the Trip Notes carefully to ensure that your experience and equipment meets the demands of a Tough + trip. When climbing, the peak days can be very long and you may be on your feet for eleven hours or more.

Split and optional grades

In order to provide a more accurate grading system, where a trip falls between two grades we use an intermediate or split grade, for example Leisurely/Moderate. Occasionally, there are optional ascents available en route, in this case the optional grade will be highlighted below the dial.

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Cycling Activity Levels

Please remember that it is impossible to be absolutely precise about how hard a bike ride may be, as there are many contributory factors. The main benefit of grading is to provide you with an overall indicator to compare one cycling trip against another. We therefore look at the following:

- Length of ride and length of cycling day
- Level of vehicle support
- Average altitude and height gain and loss
- Temperature range and likely weather conditions

- Road/trail conditions
- Remoteness of services and general level of comfort

Clearly conditions for a particular cycling holiday may vary from one month to the next. It is not practical for us to give grades for each individual departure, but you may like to take this into account before choosing a specific departure date.

Vehicle support

On the majority of our cycling trips, a support vehicle accompanies the riders. These carry tools and spares, refreshments, your luggage and even (on occasion) yourself. If there is a high level of vehicle support you can confidently book a certain grade in the knowledge that there is back-up should you get tired. Equally this means that friends or couples of different fitness levels can still enjoy the same trip together.

Activity Level (*formerly Grades*)

The Activity Level dial offers an immediate illustration of just how challenging the trip will be. Ranging from Leisurely to Tough, the grading takes into account the daily cycling distances and terrain, as well as any technical riding skill required. Exodus also considers the number of cycling days as there can be a cumulative affect from tiredness on a longer trip and the type of accommodation used, as this can also influence your day to day recovery. The activity levels are equivalent to our previous grading, so if you're used to B grade cycling you'll be perfectly at home on a level 3 (Moderate) trip.

If you are in doubt, please call us on 0800 707 6229.



Activity level 1: Leisurely

If you can ride a bike and enjoy gentle exercise, these are an ideal introduction to a cycling holiday. No routes are entirely flat, so expect some short climbs and descents. Maximum daily height gain is approximately 250 metres and daily distances rarely exceed 50kms (32 miles), any longer days are often optional.



Activity level 3: Moderate

Most people who enjoy a weekend riding at home will enjoy a Moderate trip. You need to be in good health and reasonably fit. Ideal for occasional cyclists, or as a more relaxed trip for fitter riders. Moderate off-road trips require no previous experience. Distances rarely exceed 70kms (43 miles) per day.



Activity level 5: Challenging

For any ride at this level, fitness is important. Challenging trips require confidence in your ability and physical condition. They are equivalent to an extended period of cycling at home. Previous mountain biking experience is essential for Challenging off road trips as they will involve some technical riding.



Activity level 7: Tough

Previous experience of the cycling style or surface is a must as these routes have long cycling days and tougher terrain on both road and off road trips. You need complete confidence in your fitness and technical ability to cope with difficult or steep terrain, rough surfaces and longer distances. Ideal for those seeking a challenge!

Split grades

In order to provide more accuracy, where a trip falls between two grades we use an intermediate or 'split' grade, for example 2: Leisurely/Moderate.

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Winter Activity Levels

Information on snowshoeing activity levels and cross-country ski grades is below. All other trips, such as mixed activity, Northern Lights or winter cultural trips, are set according to the general activity level descriptions as detailed above.

Snowshoeing Activity Levels



Activity level 1: Easy

Easy activities requiring a little physical effort for a short length of time. Previous experience is not necessary at this level, anyone who is reasonably fit and healthy enough to complete a weekend walk will manage.



Activity level 3: Moderate

Relatively full days, with 4-5 hours of snowshoeing, although occasional longer, harder days may be involved. Previous experience is not necessary, but you should be confident of your fitness level.



Generally 4-6 hours a day, with longer ascents and a faster pace in order to complete circular routes. There may be more challenging sections throughout the week and/or more basic accommodation in the evening. Previous experience of mountain snowshoeing and a good fitness level required are required.

Our grading system works the same in the summer as the winter, as we take the terrain into account when calculating the grades. So if you have enjoyed a moderate level 3 grade summer trip, choose a moderate winter trip (level 3).

Cross-country skiing grades

Exodus offers cross-country skiing holidays to suit a wide range of technical and physical levels. This year we have improved on our old system to be more comparable to the activity levels we use on our snowshoeing, cycling, activity and trekking holidays. Skating technique requires a certain level of competence in classic cross-country skiing, so this retains the original system. The aim remains to create groups of similar ability and fitness. We believe a slightly different system is still required, due to the tuition we provide on our holidays. This sets our cross-country skiing holidays apart, as we tend not to need to teach people how to ride a bike or walk! Our descriptions are below, however feel free to call and speak to an expert if you are unsure which grade or type of holiday will suit you best.

Grade 1 Beginners

Equivalent Activity Level - leisurely/moderate

A week for complete beginners. Inevitably we start with the basics, including how to stop using the snowplough technique and how to turn. You will be on skis for at least 5-6 hours a day with a focus on tuition, getting comfortable on skis and building towards longer tours through the winter landscape. In some centres there may also be some easy off track skiing. This involves heading off the pre-cut tracks, typically across frozen lakes or snow covered pastures.

Grade 2 Improvers

Equivalent Activity Level - Moderate

These weeks are ideal for those who have enjoyed at least one grade 1 holiday and grasped the basics. They offer tuition to refresh and improve technique and typically will ski a little further than Grade 1 weeks, and over more varied terrain, i.e. more ups and downs and therefore requiring a slightly higher level of fitness.

In some cases these weeks are acceptable for newcomers to cross-country skiing. Beginners on these weeks should be very fit and proficient in sports that develop balance - ice-skating, roller-skating or roller skiing and will need to pick up the basic technique quickly. Please contact us if you wish to book a Grade 2 holiday but have not skied before.

Grade 3 Intermediates

Equivalent Activity Level - Intermediates

A grade 3 week is ideal for those looking to push on, tackle some slightly steeper terrain and cover more ground each day. Typical groups will have a few weeks skiing behind them, be very comfortable with the basics and happy on longer day tours. There will still be tuition on these weeks, at the required level.

The Exodus race weeks - Engadin Ski Marathon CME (if doing classic style) and Finlandia Hiihto Ski Race CFX are also set at this grade.

Grade 4 Advanced

Equivalent Activity Level - Moderate/Challenging

Choose this level if you can tackle 'ups and downs' competently, manage a controlled snowplough descent, and if you want to ski at a lively pace. You should also be able to get up swiftly and easily by yourself after a fall. The mix of track and off-track skiing varies.

Be prepared for long, steep ascents and descents, and for off-track skiing over variable snow. You need good fitness, stamina and sound and controlled technique. Climbing skins will be needed on some days.

Grade 5 Challenging

Equivalent Activity Level - Challenging

Grade 5 is for experienced, very proficient skiers looking for long, steep ascents and descents, including off-track skiing over variable snow. Good fitness, stamina and sound and controlled technique is required.

Skating Style

The movement for skating is similar to ice skating or rollerblading. Skate skis are lightweight and shorter than classic skis, with increased ankle support provided in the boots. More physically demanding than classic style, once mastered most skiers find they can pick up speed and travel greater distances at a faster pace than those on classic skis. To join a skating holiday it is essential to know how to snowplough (on either classic or downhill skis) and have good balance and fitness.

Cross-country skating levels

L1 – Beginners

Recommended for those who have tried classic cross-country skiing, mastered the basics (including the snowplough) and now wish to try the skating style. Generally a faster skiing motion than classic cross-country skiing, you will need to be of reasonable fitness and have confidence on the snow. Whilst not skiing in tracks you will be on prepared, gradually undulating slopes and cover approximately 10-15km a day.

L2 – Intermediates

Covering more challenging terrain, this level is for those who have already mastered the basics of the skating style and wish to improve their skating technique. Terrain covered will be slightly more challenging and you should expect to cover 15-20km per day. You will be



taught techniques to help you increase your speed, perfect for those wishing to take on the challenge of a ski race.