



TRANS CANADA TRAIL
SENTIER TRANSCANADIEN TM/MC



NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR CLASSIFYING MULTI-USE TRAILS IN CANADA

Classification of Trails, Trail Experiences & Trail Tourism Readiness

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DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

These guidelines are being made available to our trail ecosystem partners and all of Canada's trail ecosystem to help trail operators and the trail ecosystem classify trails, define their trail experiences and evaluate their trail's tourism readiness. This guide is not a standards or engineering specification. Any graphics or visuals used are for illustration purposes only and should not be used as an issued directive for construction specification or development. Trail operators, planners and designers are responsible for ensuring their trails and trail infrastructure are appropriately approved, designed, constructed and managed by appropriately qualified volunteers, staff and/or subject matter experts. Trail operators should regularly review the condition of their trails and ensure information used in this classification process is kept up to date and adjustments are made as needed. Trans Canada Trail (TCT), its contractors and other contributors assume no liability for this content or its application.

Sound Judgement

Trail operators, designers and decision makers should make every effort to apply these guidelines. Situations may occur where trail operators or designers may make judgments that deviate from these guidelines. In these cases, the rationale for departing from these guidelines should be documented and retained. It is suggested that professional/subject matter expertise and/or legal advice be obtained.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Preparation of these guidelines was a considerable undertaking. Trans Canada Trail wishes to thank all those staff, partners and jurisdictions who supported the development of these guidelines, supplied research and best practices, and granted permission to adopt, adapt and apply content from their guidance documents. Partnerships like these, where we support one another and share our learnings, are truly a foundation of Canada's trail sector.

INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TCT acknowledges that:

The Trans Canada Trail is situated on the traditional territory of First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples from coast to coast to coast. TCT also acknowledges that the Trans Canada Trail includes land and water routes that were created and used, both historically and in some cases presently, by Indigenous peoples as seasonal travel and trade routes.

Our head office is situated on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation, part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We recognize the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation as the custodians of the lands and waters of Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal), which has long been a gathering place for diverse First Nations, including Algonquin-Anishinaabe, Atikamekw and Huron-Wendat.

We are thankful that we are able to collaborate, play and work on the Trans Canada Trail. We support community efforts to sustain a relationship with Indigenous peoples based on respect, dignity, trust and cooperation, in the process of advancing truth and reconciliation.

TRANS CANADA TRAIL

Connecting Canada from coast to coast to coast, the Trans Canada Trail (TCT, the Trail) is the longest multi-use recreational trail in the world. More than 28,000 km in length, the Trail traverses each of Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories and many Indigenous peoples' traditional territories, and connects 15,000 communities across the country. Approximately 80% of Canadians can access a local section of the Trail within 30 minutes from their home. True to its name, the Trail is a national legacy that connects people living in and visiting Canada to the vastness of our country's landscapes and the diversity of our people. TCT inspires, thrills and contributes to the health, happiness and adventurous spirit of all people.

Mission

As the longest trail network in the world, the Trans Canada Trail connects Canadians and visitors to nature and to one another, from coast to coast to coast, through accessible and inclusive outdoor activities. Through collaboration and partnerships, we build, maintain and steward Canada's national trail, a unique system of connected urban and rural trails.

Vision

Building on the achievement of connection, the Trans Canada Trail will continue to inspire everyone to embrace the outdoors, to discover the diversity of our land and people, to enhance their health and well-being, and to share their stories along this globally significant and iconic trail network.



Whitehorse, YT

SECTION: 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 WHY THESE GUIDELINES?

Great trails are one of the most desired recreational resources in Canada. Trails are also tourism drivers that bring important economic benefits to communities across the country and help to attract and retain residents, businesses and investment. But great trails do not “just happen”. They are the product of deliberate planning, design, construction and management. And, clear, consistent and visitor experience focused trail classification is the foundation of good trail planning and design and for helping visitors find the right trail for them.

Consisting of three separate guides, these guidelines are being made available to our Trail partners and all of Canada’s trail ecosystem to help trail operators (see Glossary for definitions):

- classify mixed and multi-use trails
- define the general experience their trail offers
- evaluate their trail’s tourism readiness

Focused on mixed and multi-use trails, these guidelines apply to both existing trails and to new trails that are in the planning and design stage.

Through these guidelines, we are working to:

- create national consistency in how trails are described and understood by TCT, trail operators, trail builders, visitors, land managers and the trail tourism ecosystem
- enable a robust and consistent pan-Canadian inventory of trails
- better ensure that trails are deliberately designed, built and managed to deliver the intended trail experience and meet desired trail user objectives
- enable trail operators to consistently and accurately communicate essential information to visitors about each trail; allowing visitors to select trails that have a better chance of providing their desired experience
- help minimize and avoid conflicts between differing trail activities
- support the tourism industry and local communities with the growth of trail tourism, visitor-centred investments and the promotion of trails to appropriate target markets

We recognize that trail classification and other guidelines exist for single use (e.g. hiking only) and activity optimized (e.g. mountain biking) trails and encourage trail operators to use these guidelines in conjunction with those.




*“Quality is never an accident;
it is always the result of high
intention, sincere effort,
intelligent direction and
skillful execution; it represents
the wise choice of many
alternatives.”*

– William A. Foster

Providing Answers to Common Questions

Though it may not be immediately obvious, trail operators, builders, visitors and the trail tourism ecosystem ask many of the same questions about trails, albeit at different stages of each trail’s lifecycle.

Questions we all have...

 Trail operators, designers, builders ask...	 Trail visitors ask...	 Trail tourism ecosystem asks...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who are we trying to attract to the trail and what are their expectations?• What type of trail exists or is to be constructed (summer, winter, water)?• What modes of travel are to be permitted on the trail (non-motorized, motorized, mechanized, adaptive, mixed use)?• Will the trail permit one activity or multiple activities (single-use, multi-use)? Will the trail be designed to optimize the experience of any single activity type?• What activity types will be permitted on the trail? Which activities will determine the trail design parameters?• What are the intended recreation setting, the level of development and amenities?• What is the intended level of challenge of the trail?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On which trail am I permitted to undertake my desired activity and is that trail in the recreation setting I am seeking?• Are there permitted activities that I do not wish to share the trail with?• Given my skill level and abilities, can I travel the trail and utilize amenities safely and enjoyably?• Do I have the proper equipment or do I require any special preparation to travel the trail safely and enjoyably?• Does the trail include the comfort and convenience amenities I need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What sections of the trail provide the type and quality of experience that my target markets expect?• Is the trail experience unique, appealing and of interest to my target markets?• Are the necessary amenities, accommodations and services available on the trail to meet the needs of my guests?• Can my guests be confident that the service providers they rely upon will be available to serve their needs?• Is the trail of an appropriate level of challenge and does it require an appropriate level of preparedness for my target markets?

Through these guidelines, we are creating an approach that allows these questions to be answered consistently and proactively by anyone in Canada’s trail ecosystem.


1.2 WHO ARE THESE GUIDELINES FOR?

These guidelines are for anyone or any organization involved in Canada's trail ecosystem who is interested in providing great trail experiences on the Trans Canada Trail or any other trail in Canada.

If you are...

- a trail operator or advocate
- a trail designer or builder
- a land manager or owner
- part of the trail tourism ecosystem, such as a tourism operator or Destination Management Organization (DMO)

...these guidelines are for you!



Though prepared by Trans Canada Trail, these guidelines are relevant to all mixed-use and multi-use trails in Canada.

Mont-Tremblant, flickr.com

1.3 HOW DO I USE THESE GUIDELINES?

Each of the three guides within these national guidelines are intended to be used as individual documents. However, the **Guide to Defining the Trail Experience** and the **Guide to Evaluating a Trail's Tourism Readiness** documents build off of the **Guide to Trail Classification**.

As such, we recommend that trails be classified in accordance with the classification guidelines as a first step, before attempting to define the trail experience or evaluate tourism readiness. The purpose and primary audiences for each guide are illustrated in the graphic to the right.




Guide to Trail Classification

Purpose

Provide visitor-focused planning, design and management direction.

Enable clear communication of trail accessibility information and characteristics.

Primary Audience/Users

-  Trail operators, designers, builders
-  Visitors
-  Trail tourism ecosystem

Guide to Evaluating a Trail's Tourism Readiness


Purpose

Identify priorities to grow trail tourism.

Support the attraction of tourism investment.

Enable the communication and marketing of trails to appropriate visitors.

Primary Audience/Users

-  Trail tourism ecosystem
 - Destination Management Organizations
 - travel trade
 - tourism operators and services

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Guide to Defining the Trail Experience





Purpose

Enable the communication and marketing of the trail to appropriate visitors.

Enable visitors to better select sections of the trail that align with their desired experience and abilities.

Understand the inventory and supply of trail experiences.

Primary Audience/Users

-  Visitors
-  Trail system planners
-  Trail tourism ecosystem
-  Destination marketing and trip planning