



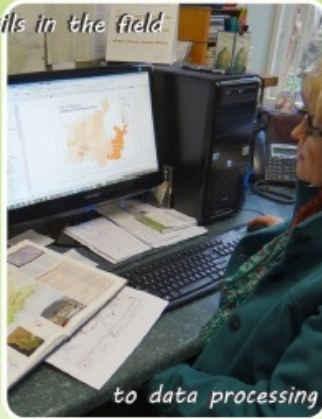
WHAT IS A GREEN FLAG TRAIL?

Green Flag Trails is a voluntary quality and sustainability eco-label for trails.

Green Flag status offers the best possible hiking experiences. Trails are however not graded subjectively from good to bad. Instead the system centres on the concept of allowing hikers to make their own **informed decisions** of the trails they'd like to walk. The usual method of 'assessing' a trail is based on subjective opinion, whereas Green Flag Trails allow trailusers to make informed choices base on trustworthy detailed information.



From auditing trails in the field



to data processing

VALUE OF GREEN FLAG TRAILS

For the Trail Users: Green Flag Trails is thus an accreditation programme that seeks to offer hikers all the information needed to ensure the hike **meets their expectations**.

Green Flag also assesses the way in which danger is managed so as to ensure a **safe** hike.

Green Flag makes use of a scientifically sound calculated procedure whereby the **difficulty rating** is determined so that all hikers can be assured beforehand if they "will be able to make it".

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With the assurance that a trail is safe and under responsible management, hikers will not feel apprehensive to hike unknown trails and **visit foreign environments** and countries. Trails where hiking fees apply will not require increase in tariff as **extra occupancy will offset cost of auditing**.

Trail Owners are **legally safeguarded** to an extent due to them showing responsibility by having an external body inspecting the trail (see however full information regarding **indemnity** on the website).

Long term **sustainability** of the trail is ensured through conservation of natural and cultural resources.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

The world has innumerable trails of many types and varying standards. Some people like difficult terrain, other a pristine wilderness experience, while yet others may prefer a rich cultural experience on a trail. An opinion of "good" and "poor" trails varies with each and every hiker.

The basis of Green Flag is the relaying of correct and detailed information so that the hikers can make an **informed choice**. If they then find this to be trustworthy, the trail experience will **live up to the users' expectation** and they will experience it a "good" trail. The more informed we are the more likely we are to find the trail that suits us best. Having a universally accepted list of criteria describing the character of the trail helps trail managers know where in the scheme of things their trail fits, and helps potential trail users decide to give it a go [see page 5].



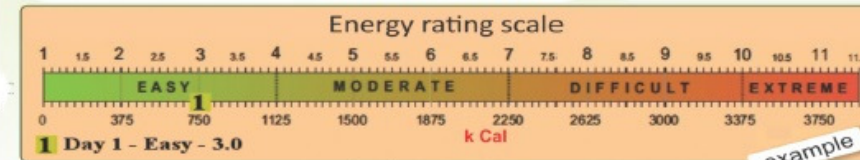
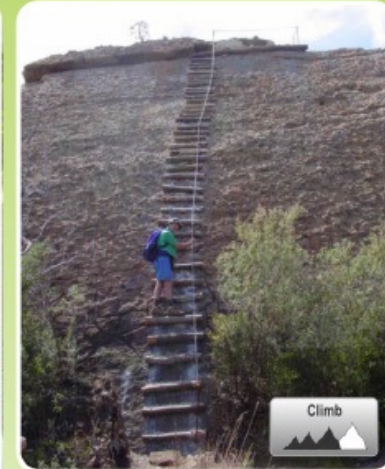
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Green Flag helps to eliminate confusing or no trail markers



Difficulty levels



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Difficulty Rating

There is no point in describing a trail in a subjective way as being “easy” or “difficult”. A trail can be measured according to two aspects:

1. Energy rating:

Calculated on the basis of the exertion factor (objectively measured in terms of the energy required) and expressed in terms of kCal. This is transferred onto a scale of 1 – 10+ : 1 being exceptionally easy and 10 more-or-less the top notch for seasoned hikers. Every person has to “calibrate” themselves on a trail for which the energy measurement is known, in order to determine which category is most suitable.

2. Technical Difficulty:

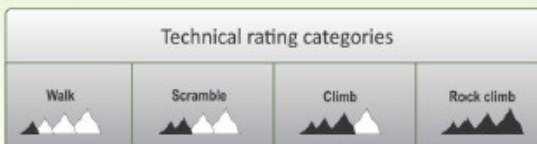
“walk”, “scramble”, “climb”, “rock climb”
Separate from the energy required, there is also the “scary factor” of heights, river crossings, chain ladders, etc. The terms are defined as follow:

Level 1 is “Walk” is where you can stroll/walk with hands in pockets.

Level 2 is “Scramble” where hands are required in some places to climb up a hill or a rocky stretch or where hikers have to slide down a steep slope or crawl. The trail is not dangerous but “uncomfortable” in places.

Level 3 is “Climb” where a ladder or chain is required to negotiate dangerous or very difficult sections.

Level 4 is “Rock climb” where ropes and other safety equipment are required. Not normally associated with hiking.



TRAIL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Green Flag recognizes trails that meet minimum standards in terms of reliable information by which trails are classified.

example: Otter

Accommodation: luxury, comfortable, basic or rustic.



Trail facilities and services rendered: parking, etc.



Difficulty level which is scientifically calculated: both in terms of energy required as well as technical negotiation.



Type of environment: pristine, rural, semi-urban.



Proof of the conservation of cultural resources.



Assurance of hikers' safety (safe, risky, dangerous).



Guided or self-guided.



Catering.



Trail format (circular, clover leaf, open-ended, linear).



Trail type (day walks, overnight, etc.).



Path character (handicapped; GPS, marked, etc.)



Environmental education



Credibility and endorsements

Green Flag Trails has been developed by a team of researchers at the University of Pretoria over a period of 15 years. It has been researched and well tested in the field and the information published in various academic and popular journals. To date over 50 multi-day trails have been audited and over 40 day walks accredited in South Africa alone.

The Hiking Organization of Southern Africa (HOSA) has been the key implementer of Green Flag Trails in South Africa under their Quality Assurance programme. With this endorsement **Green Flag Trails** has become the **leading trail advisory and trail assessment body in southern Africa**.

The system has received endorsement from the major hiking trail marketing **agencies in the country**: the National Parks Authority (SANParks), provincial conservation bodies (e.g. Cape Nature and KZN-Ezemvelo Wildlife), Forestry companies (e.g. KLF, Cape Pine), major metropolitan structures, private tourism resort (e.g. Forever Resorts), NGO's and private trail owners.

International implementation and support for the system has been forthcoming from various countries such as Peru, Swaziland, Namibia, Mozambique, St Helena and Nepal.

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