

SAC Mountain and Alpine Hiking Scale

Schweizer Alpen-Club SAC
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Grad	Path / terrain	Requirements	Example tours
T1 Hiking	<p>Well-constructed footpath. Where possible, all exposed areas are made secure with fixed cables, railings, etc. The risk of falling can largely be ruled out with normal behaviour.</p> <p>If marked according to SWW (Swiss footpaths association) standards: Yellow.</p>	None; also possible in trainers. Orientation without any problems, usually also possible without a map.	Männlichen - Kleine Scheidegg, Jurahaus hut approach, Cabane Mont Raimeux and Strada Alta Leventina.
T2 Mountain Hiking	<p>Continuous established footpath. Exposed areas made more secure. Partially steep terrain. Risk of falling not ruled out.</p> <p>If marked according to SWW standards: White-red-white.</p>	Surefootedness. Proper hiking boots are recommended. Basic orientation skills.	Wildhorn hut, Bergsee hut, Täsch hut from Täschalp, Passo Campolungo, Capanna Cristallina from Ossasco.
T3 Difficult Mountain Hiking	<p>Path not always obvious / visible. The more exposed areas can be secured. You may need your hands for balance. Some exposed areas remain, where there is a risk of falling. Pathless sections over scree or talus.</p> <p>If marked according to SWW standards: White-red-white.</p>	Good balance and surefootedness. Mid/high top hiking boots are recommended. Average orientation skills. Basic alpine experience.	Forno hut approach, Hohtürli, Sefinenfurgge, Fründen hut approach, Grosser Mythen, Pizzo Centrale from Gotthardpass.
T4 Alpine Hiking	<p>Occasionally pathless. In certain places you'll need to use your hands. Some quite exposed terrain, e.g. steep grass slopes, rock ledges, simple firn fields and minor glacier passages (with little crevasse risk).</p> <p>If marked according to SWW standards: White-blue-white.</p>	Experience in exposed terrain. Appropriate, sturdy footwear. Good orientation skills. Alpine experience. Good preparation: time and weather considerations, ground conditions & group dynamics need to be considered.	Schreckhorn hut, Dossen hut and Mischabel hut approaches, traverse from Voralp hut to Bergsee hut, Vorder Glärnisch, Steghorn (Leiterli), Piz Terri, Pass Casnile South.

T5 Difficult Alpine Hiking	<p>Often pathless. Individual easy climbing sections. Exposed, challenging terrain, steep cliffs. Bare glaciers and firn slopes which posed some risk of falling.</p> <p>If marked: White-blue-white.</p>	<p>Mountaineering boots. Very good terrain assessment- and orientation skills. Breadth of alpine experience, also in high alpine terrain. Basic skills with ice axe, rope and crampons.</p>	<p>Cabane Dent Blanche, Büttlasse, Salbitiwak, Sustenjoch Nordflanke, Bristen, Pass Cacciabella.</p>
T6 Very Difficult Alpine Hiking	<p>Mostly pathless. Grade II scrambling. Often very exposed. Terrain examples: Dangerous talus slopes, rock gullies, steeper sections of snow-free glaciers = increased risk of falling.</p> <p>Mostly unmarked.</p>	<p>Excellent orientation skills. Extensive alpine experience and strong familiarity with all technical alpine aids (ice axe, rope, crampons, security devices, etc.)</p>	<p>Niesengrat (Fromberghorn Nord), Glärnisch group traverse, Via alta della Verzasca.</p>

Instructions for use and interpretation

Routes given a grade on the Alpine Hiking Scale (T1-T6) are evaluated assuming favourable conditions, i.e. with good weather and visibility, dry terrain, suitable snow and firn cover, etc.

"Hikeable" glaciers are understood as: Glaciers and firn which, under normal conditions in summer, are bare of snow to such an extent that any crevasses are clearly recognizable and can be easily bypassed without the risk of falling in (the case on various hut approaches). Under perfect conditions, alpine equipment may not be required. It goes without saying, however, that basic equipment (ice axe, rope and crampons) and knowledge of how to use them may be required on such tours in unfavourable conditions.

A serious misunderstanding, which often leads to delicate situations, is the assumption that the alpine hiking scale (T1-T6) stops where the alpine scale (L, WS, ZS, ... AS) begins. In reality, an "Alpine hike" in the upper difficulty range (T5, T6) is usually significantly more demanding than a simple alpine tour with the rating L.

The major difference between an easy alpine tour and a difficult hiking route, is that while steep terrain on an easy alpine tour may be fitted with security aids (bolts, iron bars, etc.) or present natural features with which you can make use of the rope, a T5 or T6 hiking route generally won't. The corresponding terrain must therefore be mastered absolutely, requiring good technical skills and a cool head. Examples of exposed terrain include extremely steep grass slopes, pathless craggy terrain with poor rock quality or exposed sections of ridge. Due to the different characteristics of a typical alpine tour and a typical "extreme hike", a comparison can hardly be made, but assume this: A T6 alpine hike will require a similar level of preparation, technical skill, and fitness to a WS alpine tour, i.e. don't underestimate it.