

## Cross-Country Skiing in Gatineau Park: Frequently Asked Questions

### Gatineau Park's Cross-Country Ski Trails

#### **At what time are ski conditions posted on the website each morning?**

The first update is posted at 8:30 am. Each day, grooming operations are planned according to weather conditions. Because many unpredictable factors are at play, grooming operations cannot be planned more than 12 hours in advance.

#### **Why do the ski conditions posted on the website not always match the conditions observed on the trails?**

Ski conditions can change quickly, depending on snowfall, wind conditions and skier traffic. Tracks set at a depth of five centimetres can be covered in less than two hours with a substantial snowfall or strong winds.

#### **Why do the tracks set for classic skiing at the bottom of slopes not always begin at the same point on different slopes?**

Classic ski tracks are not set on slopes where the grade exceeds 10 percent. The assessment of the slope grade can vary depending on the operator doing the grooming. The same goes for the exact location where the tracks begin and end on the slope. The operator also adjusts the track setting according to the snow conditions. For example, if the trails are icy, the segment that is not track-set will be longer, to allow skiers to snowplow and better control their speed.

#### **What are your guidelines for grooming the trails?\***

Please see the chart "[Trail Grooming in Gatineau Park.](#)"

#### **How often are the trails groomed?**

Trails are groomed three or four times a week, depending on conditions.

#### **What factors influence the trail maintenance team's decision whether or not to work on the trails?**

In collaboration with Park management, the trail maintenance team evaluates the following factors:

- the snow base (hard-packed or soft)
- the type of precipitation received (e.g. powder or wet snow, ice pellets, rain, freezing rain)
- weather conditions and forecast.

Once these factors have been identified, the team analyzes them together as a whole and then decides if it would be suitable to work on the trails. If need be, the team evaluates other measures that could produce better results.

Consequently, grooming operations may not be undertaken under the following conditions:

- when temperatures are too mild;
- when the snow base is not deep enough (which can cause damage to the grooming machines);
- when there is a risk that the grooming machines could get stuck in water;
- when trails are littered with branches or fallen trees.

The aim is to offer good skiing conditions for the longest period possible. To do this, it is sometimes necessary to hold off on grooming in order to get the best results over the longer term. For example, after a rainfall, it is best to wait for freezing temperatures to return before grooming the trails.

### **When are trails not recommended?**

Trails may be rated as “not recommended” (indicated with an “X”) when they cannot be mechanically groomed or when trail conditions fall below standards.

### **What safety measures are available on the trails?**

Professional ski patrollers are on the trails daily, from 9 am until 6 pm. There is also a team of about 10 volunteers who patrol the trails on weekends.

Patrollers can evacuate an injured person using a snowmobile or toboggan designed for this purpose. They also have access to a defibrillator.

An emergency radio system is available in nine of the 10 day shelters. It is connected to the NCC’s 24-hour emergency line (613-239-5353). Conservation officers are also on call at all times.

### **Who may use Gatineau Park’s ski trails?**

The ski trails are for the exclusive use of skiers with a ski pass. Snowshoers who wish to use a trail are asked to remain on the trails intended for snowshoeing. For visitors on foot, there are four marked trails for hiking, covering a total of 10 kilometres.

### **Why are snowmobiles on the trails?**

The use of snowmobiles is an integral part of maintenance operations. Snowmobiles are used

- to maintain the trails when the snow base is not deep enough for grooming machines;
- to maintain the cabins and shelters;
- to clear the trail of fallen trees and branches;
- to evacuate persons who are injured (at which time a siren and flashing light are used).

**Why are the trails narrower during certain periods?**

Normally, the depressions along the sides of the trails are filled with snow to allow widening of the trail. When there is not enough snow, it is not possible to take advantage of this extra space.

**What are the NCC's criteria for determining when the cross-country ski season begins?**

Maintenance work on cross-country ski trails never begins before November 15, and conditions have to be right to enable these operations. The NCC must consider several factors before it can begin grooming the trails. First, there must be at least 10 cm of snow on the ground. Other factors are the type of snow, the extent to which the ground is frozen and the weather forecast. All of these factors are considered in the decision about when to begin setting tracks for cross-country skiing.

**What standards determine the NCC's decision to close the ski season?**

Under the conditions of the contract for trail grooming, the ski trails are maintained until March 31, if weather and snow conditions permit.

The NCC can decide to stop the mechanical grooming of trails before this date if there is not enough snow on the ground. Generally speaking, this is the case when asphalt can be seen over a large part of the parkway network. At that time, there is only a thin layer of snow or ice left in most places.

## Gatineau Park's Back-Country Ski Trails

**Who may use the back-country ski trails?**

The back-country trails, which are 1.5 metres wide, are for experienced skiers. Snowshoeing and hiking are not permitted on these trails.

**What safety measures are advised for back-country skiing?**

We recommend that you do not ski alone on the back-country trails. Also, please ensure that someone knows your itinerary and that you carry some means of communication.

The NCC has a 24-hour emergency line (613-239-5353), and conservation officers are always on call. Please note that there is no cellphone reception in some parts of the Park.

To facilitate first aid assistance on back-country trails, a new toboggan designed for this purpose has been purchased.

**What type of work is done on back-country trails?**

At the request of skiers, the 50 kilometres of back-country trails are left in their natural state. The compacting of snow on the trails is the result of skier and patroller traffic. Snowmobiles may be used to evacuate injured persons.

## Trail Grooming in Gatineau Park

Please note that trail grooming information is provided as a guideline only. Actual decisions as to when grooming operations will be carried out are based on the expertise of the Gatineau Park team.

	Primary trails	Secondary trails	Back-country trails
<b>Before the season begins</b>	Trails are cleared of branches and debris, and bridges are installed in marshy areas.		
<b>Beginning of the season</b>	When snow accumulation reaches <b>10 cm</b> , work is done to create a base.  A total of <b>48 hours</b> is needed to complete the work.	When snow accumulation reaches <b>10 cm to 20 cm</b> , work is done to create a base.  A total of <b>48 hours</b> is needed to complete the work.	Mechanical grooming not required.  The trails are patrolled on a regular basis to determine ski conditions, recommend or not recommend a trail, and ensure that there are no obstructions such as fallen branches or debris.
	Work is done on the trails at least <b>four times per week</b> .	Work is done on the trails at least <b>three times per week</b> .	
<b>Regular maintenance</b>	Work is done on Friday and Saturday nights, which ensures optimum skiing conditions on Saturdays and Sundays, the busiest ski days. Work on the trails is also done once or twice during the week.		The required work is done manually by employees.
<b>New snow accumulations of more than 5 cm</b>	A total of <b>24 hours</b> is needed to complete the work.	A total of <b>24 hours</b> is needed to complete the work.	