

CATAMOUNT TRAIL TOURS

Skills and Fitness Guidelines

Catamount Trail backcountry ski tours are on terrain that ranges from open meadows to forests and from level to hilly or mountainous. It is a wonderful and at times a rigorous way to enjoy the beauty and quiet of the Vermont backcountry in winter. However, a skier who goes on a CTA tour that is beyond his/her skill and fitness level will not enjoy the experience and in turn will also impact the entire group's experience.

A Catamount Trail tour involves skiing from 7 to 15 miles per day over a combination of flat, ascending and/or descending terrain on trails that are un-groomed but sometimes smoothed by snowmobile tracks. Snow conditions may range from fresh, deep powder to heavy wet snow or even frozen surfaces. Temperatures can range from below zero to above freezing. Weather can be sunny, snowing or occasionally even raining.

To make a tour enjoyable for all, it is important, therefore, that all members of the group have the skills and fitness to complete the tour. Below is a general description of the necessary skills and fitness:

- **An intermediate level of cross country skills and the ability to turn** so that the skier is comfortable on relatively flat terrain and both climbing up and descending on trails that may be steep and narrow in places with occasional obstructions such as gullies, fallen trees, rocks, bridges, and stream or road crossings.
- **A regular program of physical activity and good physical condition** to cope with varying terrain and weather conditions for a substantial portion of the day, as well as the ability to help others who may have difficulty or get injured.

We encourage people who have no backcountry ski experience but can handle a difficult groomed trail to try a CTA tour, but we urge you to start with an easy/intermediate tour that is no more than 10 miles. Keep in mind that a day tour will usually involve at least five hours on the trail, most of that spent in motion, and most sections have hills that go up and down. It is perfectly acceptable to sidestep, herringbone, or snowplow some of these, but if you need to take your skis off for every hill or are falling on every turn, you will not be able to keep pace with the group and not enjoy the tour.

Before going on a CTA tour please read the relevant section description(s) on the CTA web site www.catamounttrail.org/trail/sections or in the CTA Guidebook. The description summarizes the type of terrain as well as the general degree of difficulty, although the actual difficulty on a given day can vary greatly depending on snow and weather conditions. If you have questions about your ability to safely and successfully ski the tour, please discuss them in advance with the tour coordinator or tour leader.