

How to Estimate Your Hiking Time

by International Mountain Connection

When you go on a hike, it's always a good idea to figure out how long you think it's going to take. Often you can get that information in a book or on the internet. But what if the hike you want to do isn't there? Well, in that case, you need to calculate how long you think it's going to take. Do you want to learn how to do that? Let's get started!

Remember if I'm speaking too fast, if you'd like to see captions, or if you'd like to download the transcript, all of that information is available in the description box below.

There are several different ways to calculate how long a hike is going to take you and today we're going to talk about Naismith's Rule. This rule was created by William W. Naismith in 1892. He was a Scottish mountaineer.

This is a general rule of thumb and it assumes that you're in pretty good shape, you're carrying a moderately heavy backpack and there aren't any obstacles and the path is relatively smooth.

It doesn't take into consideration time to stop and take a break to sightsee or to rest. It's generally considered to be the minimum amount of time that you need to do a hike.

Based on this it's estimated that you'll travel at three miles per hour on flat terrain.

If you're doing a hike with elevation gain, you'll need to add one hour for every 2000 ft or approximately 600 m of elevation gain.

There are some corrections that can be made, but we'll talk about that a little bit later. Let's do some examples!

This is the basic formula that we're going to use: Distance divided by speed equals our estimated time.

Example 1

For our first example, we're going to say that it's a 12 mile hike. For those of you using the metric system, the equivalents are on the right in yellow.

We know the distance, now we need to look at the speed.

Remember for flat terrain, the average speed is 3 mph or 4.8 km/h.

If we take our distance and divide it by the speed, we get our estimated hiking time, which is 4 hours.

Example 2

Now let's try an example with some elevation gain. To do this, we start with our basic formula, but we're going to add 1 hour for every 2000 ft or approximately 600 m of elevation gain.

We're going to calculate a hike with 9 miles and 2000 feet of elevation gain.

We start with the distance and divide that by our speed to get our estimated time. But we're not finished!

We also need to add 1 hour for the 2000 ft of elevation gain to get a total of 4 hours for our hike.

Example 3

Our last example is slightly more complicated. Can you do it on your own?

The answer is 6.5 hours. What did you get?

First we take the distance and divide it by our speed. Then we need to add 1.5 hours because we had 3000 ft of elevation gain.

That gives us an estimated time of 6.5 hours.

This is the general rule of thumb, but what can make your hike longer or shorter? The terrain is a really good example because if it's rocky or you have to cross streams or if there is something really technical, then you need to estimate that your time is going to be closer to 2.5 mph.

Obviously if you're not going very far or your backpack isn't very heavy, then you can go faster, and you can consider about 3.5 mph as your average (speed).

However, if your backpack is heavier like 45 lbs. (20 kg), then you need to lower your average speed to about 2.5 mph.

You also need to keep in mind the fitness level of the people you're hiking with. If you're hiking with someone who has a really high fitness level, then you can estimate that they will travel at 3.5 mph.

However, if you're with someone who isn't used to exercising or carrying a backpack, then you need to estimate a speed closer to 2 mph.

Another thing you need to consider is the descent. If the descent is really gentle, you can subtract 10 minutes for every 1000 ft that you go down.

Like I said, this is just a rule of thumb (general rule). Another thing you could do is put on a backpack with the same weight that you would normally carry on your hike and just walk for a mile on flat terrain and see how long it takes you.

Have fun planning your next hike and even if it's difficult to know exactly how long it's going to take you; this will at least give you a better idea.

Some of you requested a video on an app that you can use for GPS while you're going on hikes and that will be available soon. And just as soon as it's available, there will be a link in the description box below.

Remember to click on the subscribe button and the bell if you want to receive notifications of all our new videos.

And remember, Brian isn't in the kitchen. He's in the mountains!

See you soon! Bye!