



TRAIL TALK

Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly

ISSN 1481-5982



Winter 2025

Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay 2025! By Jeremy Reesor, Director, ORTA Board of Directors

SAVE THE DATE!

The Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay will be making its return on JUNE 7, 2025!

The organizing committee has been hard at work with planning. We have already received a large volume of interest from participants, volunteers, and property owners, including a partnership with Trail Hub to serve as a checkpoint and "mid-race hub" for participants and supporters to organize and socialize between stages. While specific route details are still being finalized, we are planning to hold the race along much of the same route as in years past, starting on Rice Lake in the east and finishing in York Region in the west. Our race information page will be live soon, with registrations opening in the new year.

Thank you to all who have indicated volunteer support already. If you'd like to volunteer and haven't filled out our [volunteer interest form](#) yet, we would love to hear from you.

Any questions or comments can be sent to relay@oakridgestrail.org

We hope to see you on June 7!



Inside this issue: Annual General Meeting save-the-date; Hike News; Discovery Night Jan. 2025; new Side Trail badge

Save-the-date!

Notice of the Annual General Meeting – Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 7 p.m.

All members of the Oak Ridges Trail Association are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Association to be held at Ballantrae Community Centre, 5592 Aurora Road, Stouffville on April 24. We look forward to seeing many supporters, hikers and friends on this occasion. If you will be putting forward a motion for consideration of the membership, please share with the Board before April 10, 2025, for inclusion to the agenda. Send to secretary@oakridgestrail.org .

ORTA Election of Directors – 2025-2026

We will once again put forth a slate of nominees to be elected to serve as Directors for a period of one year. We are seeking new ideas and perspectives and your input is welcomed. We meet about six times annually and hope that you will join us. To be eligible for election as a [Director](#) at the Annual General Meeting of Members, a person must:

- a. Be a member in good standing
- b. Have confirmed in writing their willingness to serve as a director

Award Nominations for 2024-2025

Each year the Oak Ridges Trail Association seeks to honour and say thanks to those members who have made significant contributions to our organization and the development of the ORMT.

The award categories are Commendation Awards, Trail Builder Awards and Lifetime Achievement Award.

More information on submissions and how to nominate will be posted to the website in the coming weeks. In the interim, nominations can be sent to gayemas@rogers.com.



Photo credit: Galina Szlapetis

Our [previous award recipients](#) are posted on our website.

Hike News and Information by Derek Cowbourne, Hike Coordinator

Hikes

At the time of writing this, 2024 had 280 hikes scheduled, well in excess of the 213 in 2023. My thanks to our hike leaders for making this happen and to all of you who are enjoying the range of locations, speeds, and distances that are on offer. Can we make it 300 in 2025?



Photo credit: Anna Sunn

New Hike Leaders

My congratulations to ORTA members John McCuaig and Sheila King who have completed the Certified Hike Leader course run by Hike Ontario. Please show your welcome by registering for their hikes.

We can always do with additional active hike leaders, especially for moderate paced hikes, so please let me know if you are interested in taking a hike leader training course in 2025.

End-to-End – *Congratulations!!!!*

Completing the End-to-End of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a major accomplishment, whether it takes a year or more to complete it or it's done within a few weeks. So many congratulations to the following new E2Eers: Jim Adamson, Graham Allen, Karen Connor, Karen Graham, Ralf Heeren, Dorothy Lamond, Miles Mohr, Bill Morrison, Nancy Stephens and Joanne Sutherland.

Our member Joanne Sutherland (second from the left) loved this photo of the E2E group. Joanne's favourite part of the trail was the forest tracts that all linked together in the York Regional Forest and in Uxbridge.



Photo credit: Galina Szlapetis taken at the Rahmani Tract (CLOCA)

A Reminder

Please check your email and messages before setting out to the meeting location for a hike. Why? There was at least one hike in December that was cancelled because of freezing rain. Blowing snow could also lead to a cancellation. But such cancellations are not just a winter possibility: severe thunderstorms, flooding, extreme winds, etc., can all lead to short-notice cancellations. Checking your email and messages could mean you avoid a wasted or even hazardous journey.



Photo credit: Heather Cooper



Wild Birds Unlimited[®]
Nature Shop
Your Backyard Bird Feeding and Nature Experts



Make Life Better
with
Birds

Shop Online *my* **WBU** store

Wild Birds Unlimited Barrie

 (705) 726-7600
 www.wbu.com/barrie
 Shop Online: mywbu.com/barrie
 @WBUBarrie

Wild Birds Unlimited Newmarket

 (905) 868-9696
 www.wbu.com/newmarket
 Shop Online: mywbu.com/newmarket
 @WBUNewmarket

BIRD FOOD · FEEDERS · BIRDBATHS · HOUSES ·
FEEDER POLES · GARDEN ACCENTS · UNIQUE GIFTS · OPTICS

Winter Hiking Tips

The words below were in the Fall Trail Talk, but they bear repeating in the depths of winter. It is a time to enjoy the trails when they are generally quieter, the bugs have gone, and it is easier to spot the deer and other wildlife. While for experienced hikers preparing and dressing for winter conditions has become second nature, for those less experienced here are a few easy to remember suggestions to help you make the most of the season.

1. Always wear appropriate footwear! Hiking boots, good icers, and hiking poles will help to keep you safe during chilly and icy hikes.
2. Dress in layers but start cool! Don't wear everything at the start, or you'll be taking off a layer after the first hill. It's surprising how warm you can be after a short time. You can always put on a layer if you don't warm up.
3. Pack some snacks and be sure to bring water and perhaps a warm drink as well.
4. Enjoy yourself! Breathe in nature, enjoy the gorgeous scenery of our trails.
5. Have questions or in doubt, just ask. Hike leaders and fellow hikers are always happy to share their experiences and ideas: but don't be surprised if there's no single right answer!



Take the path less travelled.

Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan
Courtesy: Benjamin Hurtad Photography

Gaspé Hiking 8 Days: June 8, 2025	DOUBLE \$4,995	SINGLE \$5,895
NEW: Hike Saskatchewan 10 Days: June 20, 2025	DOUBLE \$5,295	SINGLE \$6,395
P.E.I. Hiking 8 Days: July 15, 2025	DOUBLE \$4,795	SINGLE \$5,695
Newfoundland Coast-to-Coast 10 Days: July 25, 2025	DOUBLE \$6,995	SINGLE \$7,995
Banff Hiking 8 Days: August 8, 2025	DOUBLE \$5,695	SINGLE \$7,495

PRICE INCLUDES: Roundtrip airfare from Toronto, Connections Program, motorcoach transportation, accommodation, meals and highlights as listed on website, all entry fees and passes, local guides and Tour Director. Prices are in Canadian dollars, are per person and include HST.

DeLuxeHiking
Ready for Adventure
1-888-716-5523
deluxe hiking.com

itico.ca
Registration
500009376
500009377

Official brand of
DeHare Tours
71 Mount Hope St.
Lindsay, ON K9V 5J1

Upgrade
and/or each year booked
by you can go for 2025
to the
Oak Ridge Trail Association

Please consider donating to the Oak Ridges Trail Association to:

- ❖ Celebrate life's milestones
- ❖ In memory of a loved one
- ❖ In honour of a friend or volunteer

Thank you for your donation:

- ❖ Kelly Mathews to acknowledge the special place that the ORTA trail continues to be in her life
- ❖ Robert & Sylvia Alexander on their 55th wedding anniversary
- ❖ In memory of Gary Ford. May the trails be maintained for all to enjoy
- ❖ Seniors for Nature Outdoors Club

Trail re-routes and updates

Seneca's King Campus trails have been closed for some time, but we are hopeful they will reopen later this month. Please keep an eye out for updates.

Additionally, we will continue to connect regularly with our Mary Lake contacts to emphasize how much we miss accessing those trails and keep you informed. Please do not enter the Mary Lake property during their construction.

[Ganaraska Forest's](#) west forest has active logging work underway during the winter months. Hikers are asked to avoid that area until the work is completed.


Important reminder to please check the ORTA website for [trail updates](#) before heading out onto the Oak Ridges Trail.

experience
The East Coast Trail
with
Brown Rabbit Walkabout

Hike 250 kms of beautiful coastal trails on the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland with our help.

We provide transportation from & to St. John's Airport, to and from trail heads, and three meals a day with accommodations.

For prices and information contact Isa.



Phone: 1-709-334-2208 Fax: 1-709-334-3601
Email: brownrabbitcabins@gmail.com www.brownrabbit.nl.ca

New hike leader introduction

Congratulations to our member Sheila King for completing the training and becoming a certified hike leader!

Here is an introductory message from Sheila:

I joined ORTA two years ago after trying a couple of guided hikes in the Uxbridge area. I was immediately and equally impressed by the two very different experiences and wasted no time in becoming a full fledge member so I could take full advantage of all the amazing hiking opportunities offered each week.

I have always enjoyed being out in nature and feel my best in the forest in all seasons. I am not new to hiking but when the chance to become certified as a hike leader came up, I recognized it as a way to give back to this great organization while enjoying quality time with like-minded people.

I look forward to a long and lasting relationship with ORTA and many more hikes, both as a participant and as a hike leader.



Photo credit: Anders Walters

New Side Trail Badge

Thank you to members John McCuaig and Tessa Shelvey for developing a new challenge for us.

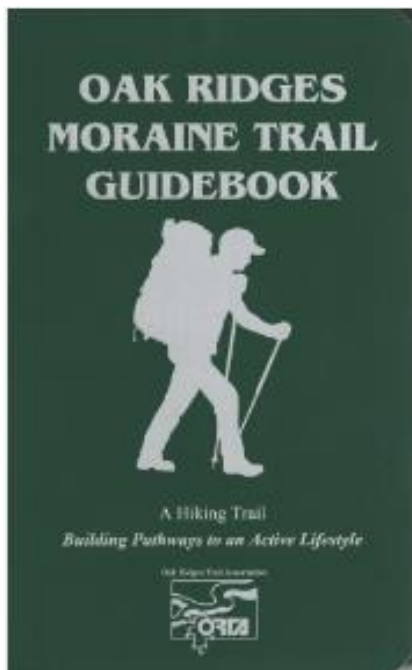
This challenge encourages members and non-members to hike several of the ORTA side trails.

Hikers will receive the beautiful new Side Trail badge once they complete 15 ORTA side trails within a 12-month period.



Here is a suggested list: East Walker Loop, West Walker Loop, Al Shaw Trail, Albright Side Trail, Secord Side Trail, White Family Side Trail, Goodwood Tract Side Trail, Hollidge Tract, Clarke Tract, Hall Tract, Eldred King Woodland, Pangman Springs, Porritt Tract, Whitchurch CA Side Trail, Robinson Tract.

You may substitute with other ORTA Side Trails but not duplicate a side trail.



Additional details will be provided in the coming weeks on our website, Weekly Trekker, Instagram, Facebook etc.

Do you need a guidebook to view the side trails? We will have guidebooks for sale at Discovery Night for \$25 or please contact Cathy Souch.

guidebooks@oakridgestrail.org

Comfortable **Hiking Holidays**
Hike an adventure. Rest in comfort.

Let's Hike Newsletter

Keeping you informed and involved

Be first to hear about :

- exciting new trip announcements
- hiking tips & travel information
 - travel stories

Email us at info@letshike.com

We promise that you will find our newsletters to be both interesting and entertaining, and we also promise never to trade or share your contact information with any other organization.



www.letshike.com

TICO #50023501 & #50023502

Message from the President

A sincere thank you to our volunteers that support ORTA! I have met so many new people over the past number of months and your work and time is appreciated.

I know the planning committee for the Adventure Relay is ramping up and I'm excited to experience this for the first time as a volunteer (not a racer LOL).

We are thrilled to announce that the Oak Ridges Trail Association has received a generous grant of \$20,000 from the [Greenbelt Foundation](#). This funding will play a key role in relaunching the annual Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay, a day-long recreational event scheduled for June 7, 2025. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, enhancing community awareness of the Greenbelt's natural features, including its beautiful trails.



I'm in the lower right taking the photo of Neil Runnalls E2E group. We were in the Ganaraska Forest on this hike.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who has already volunteered to support this event. If you are interested in volunteering and have not yet completed our [volunteer interest form](#), please do so. For any questions or comments, feel free to contact us at relay@oakridgestrail.org.

There are many exciting opportunities coming up. Anyone that knows me knows that I'm a badge collector and I look forward to working on the new Side Trail Badge.

I recently joined the coveted group of E2E hikers. I will share my reflections on my end-to-end journey in the coming months.

Please remember to mark your calendar for the [Annual General Meeting on April 24](#).

Looking forward to seeing you on the trails or at one of our upcoming events.

Best regards, Karen

Oak Ridge Moraine Trail, A Through-Hiking Destination? By Andrew Rothfisher

I have been chipping away at the ORMT as an end-to-end challenge for a few years now. From my home in Peterborough, I managed to do the easterly portion from Warkworth to Hwy. 404 by doing day hikes. As I got further from more familiar landscape, finishing the ORT became more difficult. Longer commutes to the trail heads, unfamiliar territory, seemingly endless urban stretches across the top of the GTA; I must admit, my motivation for an ORMT E2E waned. That is, until I had the chance to hike the Costa Brava trail in Spain for seven days early in the spring of 2024. Each day I walked 12-20 km following the Mediterranean coastline, from one village to another, ending in an inn, hotel or bed and breakfast. While my baggage was transported to the next village by a local tour company, many fellow travellers carried their tents and camped along the way. Each day a different hike, a different place to stay overnight, and great food (and wine) to sample.



But wait. Replace the Mediterranean with vistas of Lake Ontario! What if the ORMT could also be walked as what's called a "thru hike" over several days? Most Oak Ridges hikers that I encountered said that this is a bit of a pipe dream. Those exotic destinations - like the Costa Brava, the Dolomites or the Camino for example - have advantages that we in Ontario would have a hard time competing with: like dense populations, villages close to each other, an established culture of walking and the allure of history just to name a few. But hey, we have to start somewhere!

My first line of inquiry about a thru walk on the moraine was the Oak Ridges Trail Association. They provided a short list of campgrounds and a few bed and breakfasts that were close to the trail. Many of these locales were shut for the season or were no longer in business. More importantly though they put me in touch with a

local trail association member in the Aurora area who intimately knew her section of the trail and all it had to offer. This "trail angel", lets call her Lissa, ran a bed and breakfast a few km from the trail in Aurora. She was kind enough to offer rides to the next day's trailhead, pointed out areas of historical and cultural interest and helped to make sense of the complex (to a newcomer) transportation network. She made her part of the trail come alive! The next day we walked a further portion of the trail together.

In Explore magazine, [Kendra Slagter](#) recounted the 29 day thru-hike adventure that she and her father undertook over the full 900 km of the Bruce Trail. They camped most of the way, carefully planning for food and water. But they also relied on "trail angels"; people who out of the goodness of their hearts helped them get to trailheads, offered them overnight accommodation and generally made the hike easier.

So how could thru hikes be fostered on the ORMT? One of the first things might be to inventory what already exists for a thru-hiker. That could include overnight

accommodations near the trail and sources of clean water and food. Also, transportation that gets you to and from your daily hiking points. I found that some taxi companies along the way were willing get me to and from the next day's hike zone. And some version of "trail angels" network is essential! This brings together hikers and those locals that know and care about their "piece" of the trail.

While it may seem like a daunting task, I am pretty sure that some of the more popular thru-hike adventures did not get that way by chance. Most likely they had a small group of dedicated people who were able to leverage other community resources. But the basics - a world class hiking trail - are already there we just have to keep on walking.

Save-the-Date for Discovery Nights!

Our [Discovery Nights](#) are open to everyone! Join us to hear from guest speakers on a variety of topics.

Please mark your calendar and join us on Jan. 30, Feb. 27, Mar. 27, April 24 and May 29.

Wilma Millage is our Discovery Night Coordinator and can be reached at pres@oakridgestrail.org.

Join us on Jan. 30 to hear ORTA member Dan Revington present 'Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro' at age 69.

One of the world's "Seven Summits," Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

Dan Revington climbed Mount Kilimanjaro last year at age 69. Despite having to overcome challenges himself during the climb, Dan believes many seniors can summit Kilimanjaro.

Dan is a retired lawyer and former General Counsel and Vice-Chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal. A hike leader for the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Dan volunteers with several non-profit organizations. Currently, as a director of the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy, Dan and his fellow directors are preparing submissions to the Foreign Election Interference Commission in Ottawa.

Lake Superior


Guided Sea Kayak Trips
> Pukaskwa, Slate Islands, Lk Superior Park
> Group of Seven, Michipicoten Island

36 ft Voyageur Canoe Tour
> Trans Canada Watertrail - Denison Falls
> Hosted by Kevin Callan - Happy Paddler

Paddle Canada Certified Instruction
> Sea kayak skills/instructor, Canoe & SUP
Lodge based day adventures
Photography & Arts Workshops

ROCK ISLAND LODGE

1-800-203-9092
naturallysuperior.com
rockislandlodge.ca



Holiday Party

The ORTA Holiday Party was a huge success. Thank you to everyone that participated.



Photo credit: Heather Cooper capturing Brian & Wilma's Wedding Anniversary Hike

Please follow us:

<https://www.oakridgestrail.org>

[Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#)

Thank you to our advertisers in 2024

Thank you to our advertisers Brown Rabbit Walkabout, Comfortable Hiking Holidays, DeLuxe Hiking, Naturally Superior Adventures and Rock Island Lodge, and Susquehannock Lodge and Trail Centre, Wild Birds Unlimited.

Their advertising revenue has helped produce this and past quarterly newsletters in 2024. When you book or visit them, please be sure to let them know you are from the Oak Ridges Trail Association.

SUSQUEHANNOCK LODGE and TRAIL CENTRE
Hiking in the Highlands of North Central Pennsylvania



EASTER - April 17- 21 2025

CANADA DAY - June 27 - Wed. July 2 2025

2025 - Labour Day, Canadian Thanksgiving, & New Years.

The Lodge is located in Potter County, Pennsylvania, 2.5 hours south of Buffalo. There is no agriculture or industry in the area, just great trails. Daily hikes of 12 to 17km are led through hardwood forest, many beside mountain streams. Our lodge provides comfortable accommodation & excellent meals for \$90.00 shared bath, \$95.00 private bath-double occupancy, \$120.00 private bath-single occupancy. USD per day per person with breakfast, packed lunch, dinner and lodging.

Greg Vincent's Legacy continues of Relaxed Hiking Holiday Weekends led by Jeanette Vincent. For more information, please contact Jeanette at 519-588-5916 or vincentjeanette1604@gmail.com

For reservations call Carol Szymanik at 1-814-435-2163
Or susquelgcarol@penn.com susquehannock-lodge.com