

Moraine Relay set to return after five-year absence

The popular Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay is set to return this June after the global pandemic pushed it onto the backburner.

The Oak Ridges Trail Association announced the event's return last week following a \$20,000 grant from the Greenbelt Foundation.

While routes are still being finalized, the Adventure Relay will take participants from Rice Lake into York Region and serve as a fundraiser for the Association to support maintenance of trails that span from Caledon in the west to Northumberland in the east, and build awareness of all the natural beauty the Moraine has to offer.

The full relay begins with a canoe leg on Rice Lake, moving westward along the moraine into York Region, with 14 stages along the way. The half-relay will also begin west of Rice Lake, before finishing after seven stages at Trail Hub.

?With the exception of the two-person canoe stage, one team member will complete each stage; however, an individual may do multiple stages. Thus, teams may consist of up to 15 members,? say organizers on the full relay. ?The Half Relay course is a subsection of the main relay and will be divided into seven stages of varying distances consisting of road and trail biking, and running portions. One team member will complete each stage; however, an individual may do multiple stages. Thus, teams may consist of up to seven members.?

Participants will be organized into two divisions: Elite, which is for those participating in the full relay only, with the first one across the finish line taking home the glory; Recreational participants can take part in either event, but has a more leisurely pace.

?Take your time and focus on enjoying the journey. Only time actually spent on the course is timed (time between when a racer leaves one checkpoint and arrives at the next one) and the cumulative time for all checkpoints is added up. Time spent resting at a checkpoint, changing clothes or fixing equipment is not counted. The team with the lowest overall cumulative total wins.?

?Our past records show that the average time to complete the full relay is around 11 hours and the fastest record so far is eight hours and 51 minutes. In the spirit of adventure, participants must be self-sufficient. Each team and participant is responsible for bringing and transporting whatever equipment and supplies they may require during the race. Water and snacks will be provided at the Check Points that link stages. Full relay teams are responsible for their own canoes, paddles, mandatory safety kits, and mandatory life jackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs) approved by one of Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.?

Karen Graham, President of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Association, said they are thrilled to see the Relay come back, but added after such a long absence due to the pandemic they were almost resigned to the idea of the event being ?retired.?

Board Member Jeremy Reesor, however, had other ideas. He came to the table with lots of happy memories of participating in the Relay with his family and was determined to help bring it back.

?It is good to remind the public about the importance of the Moraine, for people to be aware there is a trail that stretches from Caledon to Northumberland along the Oak Ridges Moraine, that there is a group of volunteers, a Trail Association, that maintains the trails and runner association,? says Graham of the importance of bringing the Relay back. ?We do need to invest some funds in trail maintenance so our hope is this will be a fundraiser and help us with some funds to do some trail maintenance in certain places. A spin-off benefit would be to also have some additional volunteers, people step up to be on our Board.

?We offer more than 200 hikes per year. Membership is only \$40. It's a good deal if people want to get into shape and help nature.?

For more information on the 2025 Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay, visit www.oakridgestrail.org/adventure-relay/

By Brock Weir