

Take Your Mark

32 OF THE TOP TRAIL RUNNING RACES, FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA.



MADE IN THE SHADE

Jonathan Warner cruises through West Virginia's Kanawha State Forest at the Dirty Dog 15-K.

Unlike road races, which tend to blur together into one endless stream of blacktop, no two trail races are even remotely the same. Wildly disparate terrain, topography, altitude, climate, and even wildlife all join forces to bring unique and particular challenges to any length of race—and that's precisely why trail racing is so much fun, even if you're not the sort who typically enjoys competition. A comprehensive list of races could fill an entire issue, but here are some of our favorite trail offerings across North America, ranging from 5-K to (gulp!) 100 miles. —Lisa Jhung

WINNER'S WISDOM

"In longer races, bring a light jacket. Several times, a jacket has been the difference between dropping out and finishing in poor conditions."

—Helen Cospolich, 2008 Leadville Trail 100 winner

Desert Dash Moonlight Madness

5-K/10-K/13.1m

May 14, Las Vegas, NV

There's something mystical about running at night, no matter if you wear a headlamp or rely on the sheen of the moon. This after-dark run is part of a series that coincides with full moon nights in the desert outside Las Vegas. desertdashlv.com/races

Cougar Mountain Trail Series

5m/7m/10m/13.1m

May 14–October 30, Issaquah, WA

This five-race series at Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park east of Seattle kicks off with a 5-miler and gradually progresses to a

half marathon by the end of fall. seattlerunningclub.org/Events/Cougar/cougarmtn1.html

XTERRA Oak Mountain Runs

5-K/10-K/21-K/26.2m

May 21, Pelham, AL

Each distance is primarily run on the pristine single-track trails of Oak Mountain State Park, but as an added twist, the 5-K and 10-K send runners through a large, sloppy mud pit—twice.

xterraplanet.com/trailrun

Dirty Dog Run

15-K

May 21, Charleston, WV

One thing is certain about the Dirty Dog 15-K: You will get dirty, as well as muddy, wet, and sloppy. Mutts are welcome but optional on

this romp through Kanawha State Forest. wvmttr.org

Teva Mountain Games 10-K Spring Runoff

10-K

June 5, Vail, CO

Part of a four-day mountain sports festival, this 10-K—and its \$1,000 first-prize purse—is one of the most competitive races in the U.S. tevamountaingames.com

XTERRA Fugitive Trail Run

10-K

June 11, Richmond, VA

This urban course sends runners under bridges and railroad trestles, up a 40-foot steel ladder, over a flood wall, and through a dense forest on Belle Isle in the middle of the James River. xterraplanet.com/xduro/richmond.html

WINNER'S WISDOM

"During a long race, I use my iPod to remind me to drink often by taking a few sips at every song change. That way you're never behind; you can't make it up later." —Anita Ortiz, 2009 Western States 100 winner

The Dipsea

7.4m

June 12, Mill Valley, CA

The oldest trail race in America is also one of the most beautiful. The trail climbs 685 steps in the first half-mile before plummeting into Muir Woods, climbing up Mt. Tamalpais, and

diving to the beachside finish. (See feature, page 68.) dipsea.org

Keyes Peak Trail Run

10-K/26.2m/50-K

June 25, Florence, WI

Run through wildflower meadows and old-growth forests on one of three courses that each ascends a service road to Keyes Peak, which offers wide-open vistas of the rolling Wisconsin terrain. run.greatlakesendurance.com

Western States Endurance Run

100m

June 25-26, Squaw Valley to Auburn, CA

This is the most competitive 100-miler in the country (and perhaps the world). Its course climbs

Mt. Cranmore Mountain Race

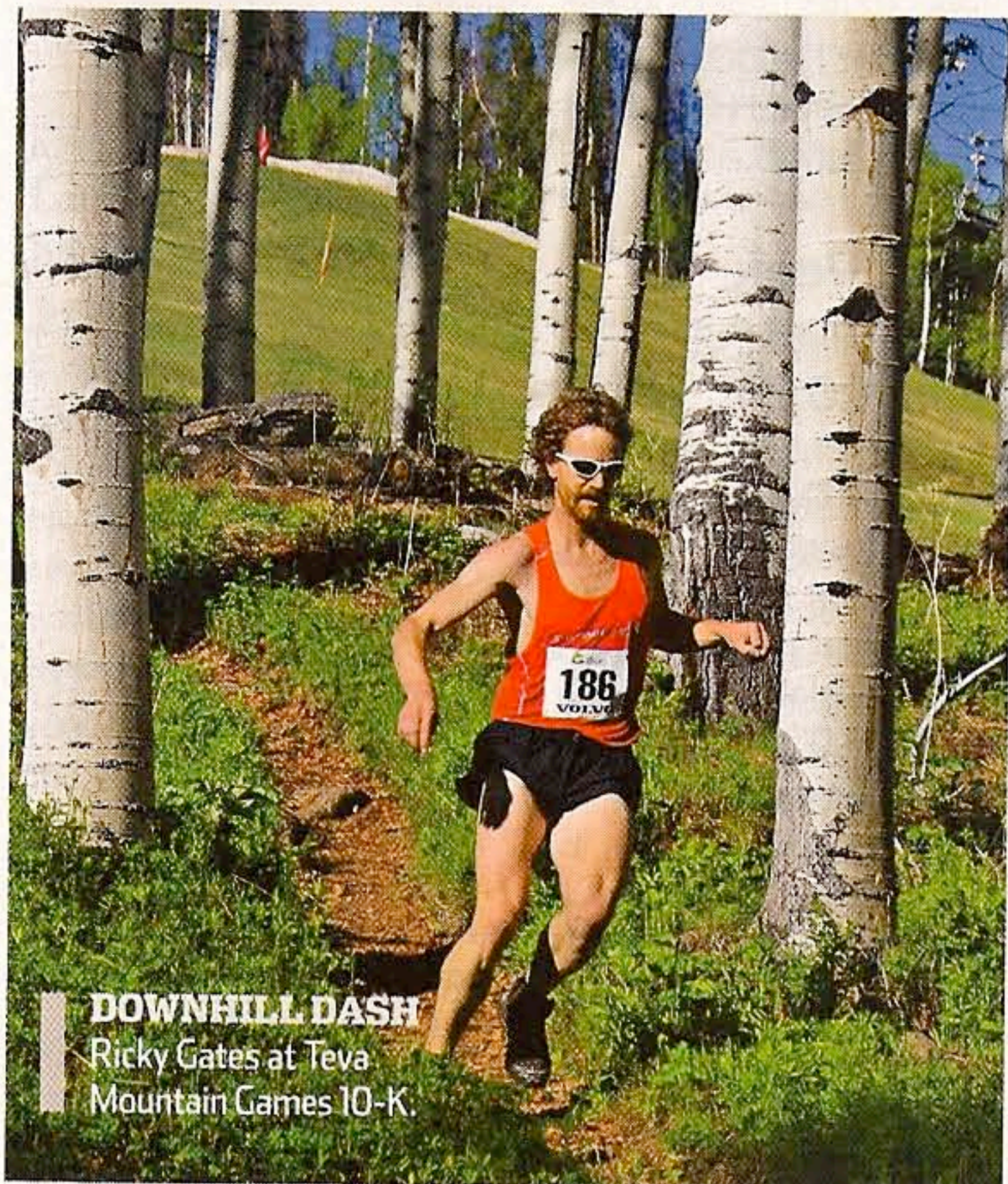
7.7-K/11.6-K

June 26, North Conway, NH

Held on the grassy ski slopes, dirt roads, and single-track trails of the Cranmore Mountain Resort, this is one of New England's best races. This year's race will double as the 2011 USA Mountain Running Championships. whitemountainmilers.com/cranmore

WINNER'S WISDOM

"Plan for contingencies. The last thing you want is for your race to be derailed because you decided to try something new." —Max King, three-time XTERRA Trail Running World Champion



and descends through the Sierra Mountain range before plummeting into deep, hot canyons of the Sacramento foothills, with a finish in front of a spirited crowd in Auburn. ws100.com

Psycho Psummer Run Toto, Run!

10m/20m/50-K

July 9, Kansas City, KS

Races are held amid stifling summer heat on hilly bridle and single-track trails, although the distances,

according to race director "Bad" Ben Holmes, "are more like 10.7 miles, a little over 21 miles, and slightly over 50-K."

psychowwyco.com/id75.html

Captain Karl's Trail Series

10-K/30-K/60-K

July 16-Aug. 27, Austin, TX

A three-event series held in the heart of Texas Hill Country, each of the races is run primarily on scenic single-track and starts after 7 p.m. on a Saturday night to avoid the wicked summer heat. tejastrails.com/CaptKarl.html

Crow Pass Crossing

24 miles

July 24, Girdwood, AK

A very wild and remote wilderness trail race through the rugged Chugach Mountains. There's a lot of unstable footing, a crossing of the thigh-high Eagle River, and the likelihood of having to slow down for bears or moose. goseawolves.com

WINNER'S WISDOM

"Running on trails is different than roads, so being married to splits and times can really throw you off on your first go. Just go have fun and explore and enjoy!" —Devon Crosby-Helms, 2010 U.S. 50-mile national champion

Escarpment Run

18.6m

July 31, Windham, NY

Proudly touted by organizers as "for mountain goats only," this race in the Catskill Mountains is a true backcountry experience. Cross the finish line a bit



WHAT COLOR IS COMMITMENT?

"THE SPEEDCROSS WAS CONCEIVED, DESIGNED AND TESTED FOR A VERY SPECIFIC PURPOSE - TRAIL RACING IN ALL CONDITIONS. PERFORMANCE LED DESIGN, PURPOSE BUILT, NO COMPROMISE CONSTRUCTION. COMMITMENT COMES IN MANY COLORS, PICK YOURS AND GO RUN."

—JEFF DILL, SALOMON TRAIL RUN FOOTWEAR CATEGORY MANAGER.

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FARTHER AFIELD

For the truly adventurous, five overseas races worth splurging on.

The North Face Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc

Aug. 26, Chamonix, France

This mind-boggling 166-kilometer race circumnavigates the Mont Blanc Massif, sending runners from France through portions of Italy and Switzerland, and back into France. ultratrailmb.com

Jungfrau Marathon

Sept. 10, Interlaken, Switzerland

One of the world's most scenic marathons, the Jungfrau sends runners up a 5,960-foot climb in the heart of the Swiss Alps. jungfrau-marathon.ch

Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon

Oct. 22-23, Sabah, Borneo

You might be surprised to find one of the world's toughest mountain races on the tropical island of Borneo, but the 21-kilometer dash up and down 13,400-foot Mount Kinabalu is as gritty as they come. This year's event will host the international Skyrunner Series Super Cup and should draw a deep international field of runners. climbathon.sabahtourism.net

Tough Guy

January 2012, Perton, England

Less of a traditional trail run and more of a test of survival, this 10-K makes the standard mud run seem like a lap around the track. Obstacles include jumping a couple stories into nearly frozen pools of muddy water, crawling through dark and narrow cement tunnels, and climbing through electrical fencing—while soaking wet. toughguy.co.uk

Croesus Crossing

January 2012,

Barrytown, New Zealand

The spectacular 26-K run follows the Croesus Track on the West Coast of the South Island, and competitors are required to carry safety items like a whistle and survival blanket. nelsonevents.co.nz/croesuscrossing.htm

bloody and you'll earn a commemorative button to honor your battle scars.

escarpmenttrail.com

WINNER'S WISDOM

"The most successful distance runners are those who best deal with the low points as opposed to those able to run the fastest when we feel the best. The longer the race is, the more that applies."

—Geoff Roes, 2010

Western States 100 winner

Eagle Creek Half- and Full Marathon

5-K/15-K/13.1m/26.2m

Aug. 6, Indianapolis, IN

With a start and finish in the heart of Indianapolis, racers might be surprised to find themselves on single-track. The marathon runs the out-and-back of the half marathon course around Eagle Creek Reservoir twice.

planetadventurerace.com/trail/eagle/index.shtml

Mt. Ashland Hill Climb

13.3m

Aug. 6, Ashland, OR

From town to the top of the 7,500-foot summit of Mt. Ashland, the course climbs more than a vertical mile. This year's race will once again be one of the marquee events of the La Sportiva Mountain Cup.

mtashlandrun.com

Jupiter Peak Steeplechase

16m

Aug. 6, Park City, UT

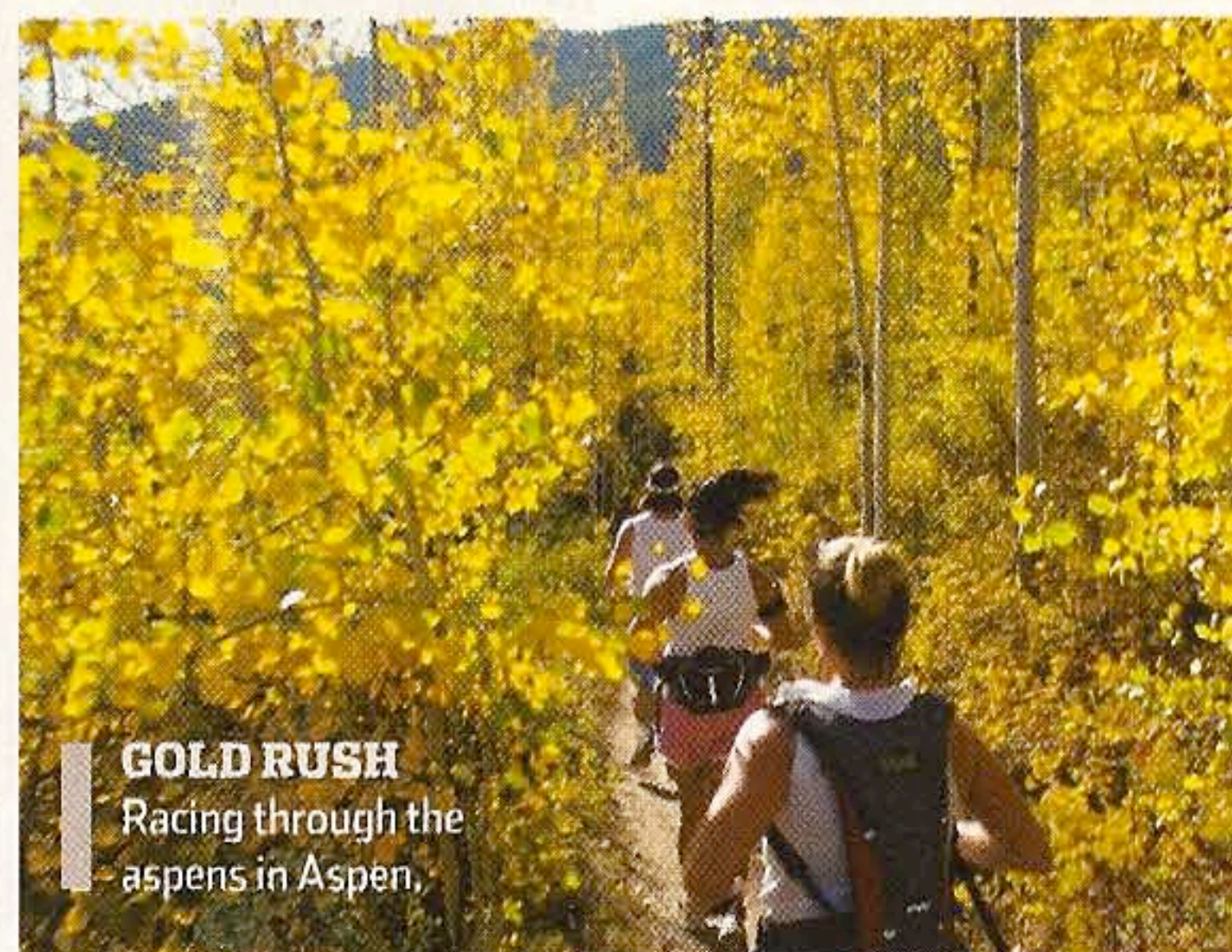
A race from Silver City Cafe to the summit of the race's namesake peak, at 10,400 feet, then back down.

mountaintrails.org/category/events

Leadville 100

Aug. 20-21, Leadville, CO

Follow the footsteps of gold miners, Tarahumara Indians, and the world's elite ultrarunners at this high-altitude race that twice



tops out at 12,600 feet on the aptly named Hope Pass. leadvilletrail100.com

Pikes Peak Marathon

13.3m/26.2m

Aug. 20-21, Manitou Springs, CO

Approaching the 14,115-foot summit reduces even the greatest runners to a walk, especially after starting 8,000 feet below.

pikespeakmarathon.org

WINNER'S WISDOM

"Develop a race routine and stick with it. That might include everything from your wake-up time, a cup of coffee, the same breakfast you eat on most mornings, a racing outfit you're comfortable in, and pre-race jogging and stretching." —Brandy Erholtz, 2008 and 2009 U.S. Mountain Runner of the Year

Continental Divide Trail Race 10-K

Aug. 27,

Laurel Springs, NC

Winding through the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, this race challenges runners with rooty, rocky single-track sections through thick

forests. This year, the leaders will battle for bragging rights in the USA 10-K Trail Championship. continentaldividetrailrace.com

Imogene Pass Run

17.1m

Sept. 10, Ouray, CO

One of the most awe-inspiring trail runs in the Rockies, this high-alpine point-to-point run tops out at 13,114 feet before sending runners on a fast and furious descent into the ski town of Telluride.

imogenerun.com

Canmore Nordic Centre Race

6.8-K/14.5-K/21-K

Sept. 17, Canmore, AB, Canada

Held on the ski trails of the Canmore Nordic Centre (site of the 1988 Winter Olympics), this race is part of the Salomon 5 Peaks

Trail Running Series held across Canada.
5peaks.com

XTERRA Trail Run National Championship

5-K/10-K/21-K

Sept. 17, Bend, OR

The culmination of a 60-race national series, these races are held on trails in the Deschutes National Forest. A \$5,000 prize—and tickets to the December world championship in Hawaii—are up for grabs in the 21-K.

xterraplanet.com/trailrun

WINNER'S WISDOM

"To keep your gels from becoming thick in cold weather, keep them close to your body—tucked in a pocket or even taped to your hip." — *Glen Redpath, 2009 Canadian Ultrarunner of the Year*

Grouse Grind Mountain Run

2.9-K

Sept. 18, North Vancouver, BC, Canada

Short but sweet (and excruciating), the Grind sends runners up the 2,800-foot face of Grouse Mountain. It's dubbed "Mother Nature's Stairmaster," for good reason.

grousemountain.com

Vasque Golden Leaf Half Marathon

13.1m

Sept. 24, Aspen, CO

The toughest part about this half-marathon—aside from the lung challenge of the thin air above 9,000 feet—is keeping your eyes on the trail instead of the spectacular golden hue of the early autumn aspens.

aspenrecreation.com

NipMuck Trail Marathon

36m

Oct. 2, Ashford, CT

The course of this popular and somewhat zany event is run on a winding figure-8 course over classic rocky, rooty, and rolling New England terrain. It's the oldest race in New England's Grand Tree Series, and winners earn delicious homemade apple pies. What's more American than that?

marathonguide.com/sites/nipmucktrail

Soulstice Mountain Trail Run

6m/11m

Oct. 8, Flagstaff, AZ

Run on single-track and double-track trails at between 7,900 and 8,800 feet, the Soulstice races feature beautiful mountain scenery and some tough, rocky climbs. Bonus: It has one of the best post-race parties anywhere.

natra.org

JFK 50 Mile

50m

Nov. 19, Boonsborough, MD

The initial inspiration behind this huge event came from JFK's challenge to military officers to run 50 miles in 20 hours. The trail travels from technical single-track to the flat, wide towpath along the C&O canal, and attracts more spectators than nearly all other ultras combined.

jfk50mile.org

Living History Farms Race

7m

Nov. 19, Urbandale, Iowa

With nearly 7,500 runners braving the frigid November conditions—many of them in zany costumes—Living History is the

largest cross-country race in the U.S.

fitnesssports.com/November_races/LivHistFarms/lhf_index.html

The North Face Endurance Challenge

5-K/10-K/13.1m/

26.2m/50-K/50m

Dec. 3-4, Sausalito, CA

There's something for everyone in this culmination of a four-stop tour. The 50-mile race offers the richest prize in trail running, with \$10,000 going to the first-place finisher in each gender.

thenorthface.com/endurancechallenge

WINNER'S WISDOM

"Try not to get caught up in the excitement of the start line and go out too fast." — *Bev Anderson-Abbs, 2009 Diablo 50-Mile overall winner*

Florida Challenge Trail Runs

5-K/13.1m

Jan. 2012, Lithia, FL

Set on the site of a former strip mining operation, Alafia River State Park offers forested courses around ponds, hills, and rock formations.

floridastateparks.org/alafiariver/default.cfm

Mount Mitchell Challenge

26.2m/40m

Feb. 2012, Black Mountain, NC

As if running to the top of 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell—the highest point in the eastern U.S.—isn't hard enough, this race takes place in late February. blackmountainmarathon.com
For more races, visit runnersworld.com.



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