

Tackle some trails

Been there, run that? Boost the fun and fitness gains of your loop by going off the beaten path.

By SARA ANGLE

If you want to get more out of your run—more muscle firming, more calorie burning, more stunning views to soak in—take it off-road. “Pounding pavement can make you a good runner, but taking on trails can turn you into an athlete,” says David Roche, a running coach and ultrarunner in Palo Alto, California. “On a normal trail run, you’ll be leaping over sticks and logs, climbing steep hills, and sprinting around switchbacks. The movements are diverse, so your body gets stronger, more agile, and skilled at propelling in multiple directions rather than just forward,” he says. And all those mini challenges recruit more muscle fibers.

“When you’re running on uneven ground, your thigh muscles in particular work harder than they would on flat surfaces,” says researcher Alexandra S. Voloshina, who conducted a study at the University of Michigan on running on uneven terrains. Even little ups and downs underfoot elicit enough muscle action to rev your fat melt: A surface-height variability of just one inch can increase calorie burn



FIT FASHION

The North Face Runners Trucker (\$30, thenorthface.com).
Buff Reflective Neck Gaiter (\$25, buffusa.com).
Patagonia Women’s Capilene Lightweight Zip Neck (\$59, patagonia.com).
Stella McCartney Adidas Run Belt (\$65, adidas.com).
Aether Pulse Legging (\$115, aetherapparel.com).
Adidas Terrex Agravic GTX shoes (\$150, adidas.com).

Makeup by Jessi Butterfield/Exclusive Artists Management for Diorshow; hair by Matt Fugate/Exclusive Artists Management for Kenotase Hair Care



by 5 percent, the research found. (That would mean some 40 extra calories per hour at an eight-minute-mile pace.)

Then there are the hills you may encounter. The strength you build going uphill will translate to a quicker pace when you're back on pavement. "Playing on dirt works all the physiological systems that matter on the roads, like lactate threshold [the point at which lactic acid accumulates and your performance dips] and VO₂ max," Roche says.

Best of all, virtually anyone can take up trail running. Be creative with your

definition of a trail—anything off pavement counts. Simply follow our pro tips to hit the ground running.

Be ready for action

On the trail you might not have access to things like water fountains, bandages for

Go-to gear

1/ GENIUS JACKET

The **Altra StashJack** has a cutout for your backpack, so you can shed the layer midstride—no fumbling with straps. (\$130, altrarunning.com)

2/ STRONG SPANDEX

A built-in support web in the **CW-X Endurance Generator Tights** provides extra stability to places you need, like the gluteus medius and hip flexors. (\$170, cw-x.com)

3/ REINFORCED RUNNERS

The rubber toe guard on the **Adidas Terrex Trailmaker GTX** protects the high-wear area from inevitable stubs. (\$140, adidas.com)

4/ HANDS-FREE H₂O

The **Osprey Rev 6 Hydration Pack** gives you enough room for essentials, plus a 1.5-liter water reservoir for long runs. (\$100, ospreypacks.com)

blisters, or even cell service, so think ahead. A hydration pack that can also store a few extras is essential, says Krissy Moehl, an ultrarunner and a coach with Revolution Running, a training club with multiple locations. Throw in a snack in case you're out longer than you expected, and pack a lightweight jacket in case the weather cools off or it rains. (See our picks on these pages.)

Ignore your speed

Running on trails means your overall pace may be slower, because you're constantly adjusting your footing to changing terrain—rocks, roots, moss, mud, sand—Moehl says. The perk? "You'll probably stay on the trails for longer because you're enjoying the scenery," she says.

Mix things up

Just like road running, you can change up the types of workouts you do on trail, says Meghan Hicks, an ultrarunner and a coauthor of *Where the Road Ends: A Guide to Trail Running*. The difference is that you need to choose your path wisely. A trail with many obstacles can improve your agility, and if you want to build strength, hike up a trail and run downhill to work your quads. On the flip side, for speed work, head to a spot that's relatively flat and clear—wading through a creek midway won't help you get your heart rate up.

Lean in on the uphill

Your body's most efficient posture for running hills is to hinge (from your hips) slightly toward the incline, which brings your center of gravity forward, Hicks says. As you climb, use your arms to help propel you by driving the swing, both forward and back.





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Let it go on the way down

On steep descents, your natural instinct is to throw on the brakes by digging in your heels, Hicks says. “But that’s actually quite impactful on your skeleton, because it doesn’t allow your muscles to absorb the shock of your landing,” she says. Instead, adjust your cadence by speeding up your footfall. “Think of your foot just tapping the ground before it comes immediately up again,” Hicks says. And try to land with your entire foot—this ensures all the lugs on the outsole of your shoe are digging into the ground, which prevents you from falling.

Train off-trail

Leg and core strength are key for thriving on the trails, Roche says. He suggests doing three minutes of lunges—one front, one lateral, one rear,

then switching legs—and one minute of step-ups on a box every other day. Then work up to one minute each of front and side planks. “Those seven minutes can make a big difference,” Roche says.

Recover smart

Trail running can cause more muscle breakdown than running on flat ground, because your leg muscles are contracting eccentrically for longer, Roche says. The breakdown is good because it leads to muscle growth and increased strength, but it also means you’ll need to take care of your muscles to prevent injury. Make time to foam roll for 10 minutes a day, focusing on your quads, hips, butt, calves, and shins, he recommends. ★



Key trail accessories that multitask

STAR TECH

Map and track your routes using the waterproof **Suunto Ambit3 Vertical’s GPS system**. Vibration alerts about your heart rate, pace, distance, ascent, and recovery time keep you on track. The battery lasts up to 100 hours in training mode. (\$519 with heart rate monitor, suunto.com)

COMPACT COVER-UP

Ultralight yet water- and wind-resistant, the **Outdoor Research Tantrum Hooded Jacket** packs inside its lower-back pocket to be strapped around your waist or clipped to a harness, so you’re never caught in the rain. (\$110, outdoorresearch.com)

Find your footing with rugged picks

FAST FEET

Make the lightweight **Altra Superior 2.0** your trail runner for dirt-only paths. Take out the sole’s removable plastic rock plate and it can double as a road shoe, too. (\$110, altrarunning.com)

OFF-ROAD WARRIOR

The zip-up, fold-down ankle guard on the water-repellent **North Face Ultra MT** protects you from debris on rocky trails. (\$170, thenorthface.com)

WEATHERPROOF PAIR

Specially designed for mucky terrain, **Merrell All Out Crush Tough Mudder** trail shoes have multidirectional lugs, which give extra grip and prevent mud from caking on. (\$100, merrell.com)

ALL-AROUND CRUISER

The **361-Ortega** shoes have tough lugs to keep your footing secure on any terrain. They’re also light enough to keep a quick pace on easier paths. (\$120, 361usa.com)



Styling by Rachel Strickley/BA-Reps.com