

Trail Running Gains Popularity as Runners Discover the Joys of Traversing the Backcountry

- By Jenny Montagne, Vermont State Parks

Trail running is an emerging sport which combines the endurance and strength required for long distance running with the variable terrain and elevation changes of hiking. The sport has been steadily growing in popularity over the past several years as more and more runners take to the woods to train. Many runners prefer trail running to more traditional road running because trails tend to be softer and more forgiving than concrete. Trail running also allows the runner to become immersed in nature and explore new wild areas, which always keeps things interesting; dodging obstacles like rocks and roots requires focus and quick thinking.



Whatever your ability or comfort level, there are a wide variety of places to give the sport a try. Trails can range from flat, multi-use rail trails (former railroad routes) to more mountainous hiking trails. In Vermont, there are many different places to get out on the trail, from the [Montpelier-Wells River Rail Trail](#) to park roads at places like [Mt. Philo](#) and [Little River State Park](#) to more challenging locations like [Camel's Hump](#) and [Underhill](#) State Parks.

If you are interested in trying trail running, there are a variety of resources to help you get started. Websites like [Runner's World](#), the [American Trail Running Association](#), and the [Vermont State Parks Trail Running web page](#) provide training tips for beginners and more experienced runners alike. Training apps like [Strava](#) can help you record your run times and map your routes. Also, check out local trail running forums like the Vermont-based [Long Trail Running Club](#) to get to know other trail runners in your area and try out new trails.

To learn more about the experience of trail runners, check out our new trail running blog series which follows Rebecca Phelps, Steve Snook, Jay Hollingsworth, and Matt Becker, all [Agency of Natural Resources](#) employees, on their running adventures! Over the past several weeks, the group has run at [Little River](#), [Camel's Hump](#), [Underhill](#), and [New Discovery](#) State Parks as well as the Perry Hill Block of the C.C. Putnam State Forest in Waterbury. Follow along on our [blog](#) to read descriptions of their runs and see photos, videos, and maps of their trail routes.