

Ringling Rocks (13 km Dirt Road & Trail)

A good route to run when wintery weather conditions exist in Butte. The arid Pipestone area gets less snow than Butte and the hills offer some protection from wind. Loop can be run as mapped or as any of multiple variations. Light if any traffic. The area does have days when ATV riders frequent the trails.

What are the Ringling Rocks?

A natural formation of dark maroon colored boulders piled as if dumped from an alien spacecraft there on the sidehill. The boulders have a high metal content. That and their stacking arrangement gives them a resonance like a bell when tapped with metal. Each boulder gives off a slightly different tone.

Directions:

Exit I-90 at Pipestone (at the eastern base of Homestake Pass) and continue driving (or begin running from there if you like) north of I-90 on the Ringling Rocks Road which initially parallels I-90 eastward, before turning north, where the road crosses a cattleguard, a railroad track, and another cattleguard. Park at the rustic pullout immediately after the second cattleguard.

Continue on foot on the Ringling Rocks access road (a.k.a. Route 2) to the top of the Ridge. The road crosses a patchwork of public and private land, but for the most part you will be on BLM ground. At the ridge you are close to the Ringling Rocks, but the mapped running route bypasses the Rocks, going immediately down the west slope. This section is steep, and it is often icy in the winter. The mapped route turns left at a fork near the bottom of the gulch and then follows the drainage down Route 9 -- a longer section of mostly single track trail. Take the first 4-wheeler path that goes left (east)steeply back up over the same ridge. That track widens a bit as you go, and it descends back down to Route 2 that you started on. Retrace your steps for the final few kilometers.

Description:

Part gravel road, part 4-wheeler trail, and part single track. Lots of hills. Areas of shade, but mostly exposed to sun, especially in summer.

Negatives:

Not many directional signs.

Rocky portions of trail not ideal for fast paced running.