

American Gulch to CDT to Champion Pass (17 km dirt road then double track trail)

A beautiful point-to-point beginning on dirt road where you start with a big climb and then parallel the ridgeline down, up and down again including a section of Continental Divide Trail. Arrange return transportation from Champion Pass. Normally passable from June through October, but snow and ice can linger in high areas.

Directions:

Exit I-90/I-15 at Rocker and proceed west then north on Browns Gulch Road for 21 km (dirt for the last 15 km) to the turn of American Gulch Road.

Begin run from there going north. Take the first right turn to the east at the junction with FS Road #608 where you also crest the Continental Divide. Stay on the road as it parallels the Divide to 11 km where you will cross the Four Corners intersection and then enter the Continental Divide Trail for another 6 km to Champion Pass.

Alternative start: The unpaved final 15 km of Browns Gulch Road preceding American Gulch is a lightly used dirt road that meanders through farm land along the creek bottom as the valley narrows. Any place on this part of Browns Gulch would be a good place to begin a run. Winter running is also normally accessible on lower Browns Gulch Road.

Alternative finish: The CDT continues past Champion Pass as part the existing road network to Blizzard Hill (2300 m altitude) and beyond...

Description:

The 17 km route has net altitude gain of 260 meters, but its gross elevation change is closer to 600 m. The footing is normally good through 11 km where you enter the CDT which has some rocky areas and a few small boggy spots.

Negatives:

Return via automobile shuttle needed, with a driver who has the knowledge to negotiate unmarked mountain roads to and from Champion Pass. The drive from American Gulch to Champion pass and back is 42.2 km, and the drive back to the start takes ~40 min under good driving conditions.

Mountain lion habitat – running companion recommended.

Cows roam on the CDT so avoiding the occasional pie is a must.