

Deer Lodge to Champion Pass (23.2 K on Boulder Road)

A good route to run in Deer Lodge when the wind blows from the west, which is the norm, and although it can be run out-and-back, it's nice for sightseeing to arrange a ride back from your planned turnaround point (not to mention avoiding the west wind and a lot of downhill running which can be harder on your 'bod'). Light if any traffic, and the road stays open for most of the year up to the snowmobile parking area near 15 K. Beyond the 15 K, snow often becomes an issue from October through May.

Directions:

Exit I-90 at Deer Lodge and turn east on Milwaukee St. at the only stoplight in town. Milwaukee St. passes under I-90 at the edge of town, and that is a good point to start your run. Turn right (south) on Boulder Road and parallel I-90 for 1 K before veering away to the east as you begin a steady climb that continues the rest of the way. Stay on the main road and stay right at the "Y" just past 15 K where Spring Emery Road branches off. There is another somewhat confusing "Y" in the road just past 18 K. Stay left there and stay left again at the "Y" prior to 20 K.

Description:

The first 2 K are paved, and the rest is graded dirt. You will be in the open until you enter the wooded areas at about 15 K. There are a few steeper pitches but most of the climb is moderate. Primitive camping sites available at Orofino Campground near 19.5 K.

Negatives:

Can be muddy with rain or snowmelt.
Transportation needed from the finish.

Other Notes:

The Continental Divide trail crosses the road at Champion Pass, and the trail is another nice run in either direction.

The road continues on the east side of Champion Pass (with many branches) for another 25 K to I-15. After the road drops off the pass, down into Lockhart Meadows, it then skirts the Boulder River the rest of the way.