

FASTPACKING GEAR—PACKS, BAGS, TENTS, MORE!

TrailRunner

One Dirty Magazine

JUNE 2008 • ISSUE 52

QUICK, LIGHT, OVERNIGHT

And, no, you don't have to be Andrew Skurka to enjoy fastpacking

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Ricardo Montalban of Fantasy Island had walked out to greet us in his white suit. We ditched the packs for a series of quick dunks, imbibing the energy of the falls and the river. Swimming holes are not made any nicer, nor much colder, to a couple tidal boneheads from the Chesapeake Bay.

From there, we bushwhacked a lightly blazed trail. Despite, or because of, its untamed difficulty, the Dry River Trail was a treat to run. We pushed above treeline to about 4500 feet, which contrasted with the lush, green wilderness area. Having covered 6.9 miles and spent more than an hour swimming, looking for lost glasses and route finding on the poorly marked trail, we arrived at Lakes of the Clouds hut in 4 hours 52 minutes. It was slightly comforting to learn that most people traversed the Dry River Trail as a two-day hike. We sat down to soup and brownies and were out the door at roughly 3 p.m., headed up Crawford Path toward Madison Springs Hut.

Despite the urgency of making it to the hut in time for dinner, my legs were slowing down. At the same time, Mike, a much stronger climber, was speeding up.

"You are the only way we are getting fed," I said.

"You sure? Are you OK?"

"I'll make it, but you had better make sure there's still food for me!"

Mike took off. The trail didn't miss a mountain or a tricky, rocky, descent, wrapping around Mount Jefferson, with climbs down rock faces just difficult enough to keep me slow and watching my feet. At one point, I realized I hadn't eaten anything since the Lakes hut, almost three hours ago, so I sat down, wolfed some GORP, then got cranking again.

I finally spotted Madison Hut, an egg in a nest of trees behind Mount Adams and beneath Mount Madison. I hop-stepped down a winding trail, having covered the 6.8 miles in 3 hours 42 minutes (still short of the recommended hiking time of 4 hours 20 minutes).

Mike walked out of the hut. "Whoa! You made it! I saved you a spot."

Inside Madison, a full hut of 52 people sat at benches, slipping words between mouthfuls.

"Welcome to Madison. Soup?" said one of the crew.

"You bet."

"Sweet! Sal..."

"Please!"

Followed by some of the finest chicken casserole I've tasted.

FASTPACKING WARM-UPS

Not ready to camp in the wilderness?

Try one of these multi-day running alternatives // By Stephanie Reighart

Overnight Credit-card Runs

Aspen to Crested Butte via Triangle Pass, Colorado. This stunning high-alpine trail links two historic ski towns. From Aspen, follow East Maroon Pass to Copper Creek, ending at the ghost town of Gothic. Alternately, take Conundrum Creek Trail's gradual ascent through a prismatic meadow of alpine flowers (most plentiful in July) and shady spruce forests. Stop for a muscle-soothing soak in the natural Conundrum hot springs at mile nine, but don't linger too long, and save strength to ascend Triangle Pass's scree slopes and descend Copper Creek to Gothic, eight miles from Crested Butte. Spend the night in Elk Mountain Lodge, built in 1919, or one of eight beds and breakfasts. 24 to 27 miles. www.gunnisoncrestedbutte.com

Brevard to Pisgah Inn, North Carolina. In the Southern Appalachian Mountains, the quaint mountain town of Brevard is situated on Pisgah National Forest's front door. From the Black Mountain trailhead, enjoy stirring waterfall views along the Barnett Branch Trail en route to the Mountain-to-Sea Trail. Run through lush, fern-and-moss-covered undergrowth on your way to the hunting-lodge-inspired Pisgah Inn, nestled in the shadow of nearby 5700-foot Mount Pisgah. Feast on fresh-caught mountain trout and behold views of dense, oak-forested peaks and misty valleys from your balconied bedroom. 16 miles. www.pisgahinn.com



TransRockies

Multi-day Stage Races

Chattanooga Mountains Stage Race, June 20-22, 2008. This no-frills event costs only \$60 (supply your food) but delivers three days' trail running on three formidable Chattanooga peaks. Each day's run starts and ends in Chattanooga and ranges from 18 to 22 miles along oak-shaded singletrack wrapping around the bases of Lookout, Raccoon and Signal mountains. Temperatures are typically in the 80s and humidity is high, so aid stations are every three to five miles. Book your own hotel or campsite in Chattanooga. www.rockcreek.com/stagerace

TransRockies Run, August 25 to 30, 2008.

Grab a partner for this six-day, 125-mile adventure across the spine of the Rocky Mountains, from the saloon-lined main drag of Buena Vista to the European-inspired, cobblestone walkways of Beaver Creek, Colorado. Each stage averages 20 miles and follows a mix of forest roads and single-track to each day's camp (set up while you run) featuring hot showers, catered meals, massage and physiotherapy. Entry fees start at \$1350 per person, but include camp services, a nightly multimedia show recapping the day's stage and piles of sponsor schwag including shoes, clothes, watches and an awards banquet. www.transrockies.com

Mountain RATS Stage Race, July 31-August 3, 2008. Near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, this inaugural four-stage race is a loop (covering 10 to 25 miles daily) through waving aspen groves, rugged canyons and along high alpine ridges. Be prepared for significant elevation changes and fickle mountain weather. Carry your own food and clothing for the entire race while organizers transport only your sleeping bag from camp to camp and set up your tent. The race fee starts at an economical \$500 and is limited to 50 participants. www.geminiadventures.com/mrats.html



Alpine Club of Canada

Self-Guided Hut-to-Hut Trips

10th Mountain Division Huts, Colorado. Nestled among the Rockies' western slopes around Vail and Aspen, this network of 29 huts provides charming backcountry accommodation and access to miles of mountain trails. Trails are usually marked, but carry a map and compass or GPS to help you find your way.

For a stand-out three-day link-up, run from the Sylvan Lake trailhead (south of Eagle) 11 miles to the Harry Gates Hut. The following day, ascend 15 miles along a gradual ridge to Holy Cross Wilderness Area, then wind down Yeoman Park's switchbacks, ending with a final five-mile climb. Spend the night in the two-story Polar Star Inn before day three's 18-mile run back to the trailhead. Carry only your sleeping bag and food, as each hut has a fully equipped kitchen and padded bunks. Advance bookings required. \$28 to \$40 nightly per person. www.huts.org

Alpine Club of Canada Huts, Alberta and British Columbia. Some of these charming shelters, like the historic peeled-log Elizabeth Parker Hut, scattered throughout the Canadian Rocky Mountain National Parks, date back to 1919. Others are insulated sheet-metal sheds on glaciers or modern log structures.

The easily accessible Stanley Mitchell Hut in Yoho National Park or Sydney Vallance Hut in Jasper National Park make great trail-running bases, situated six and 14 miles, respectively, from trailheads. Drop your food, sleeping bag and other supplies at the hut and spend a day or two exploring the area's well-marked trail system. Advance bookings required. \$25 to \$36 nightly per person. www.alpineclubofcanada.ca

Appalachian Mountains Club (AMC) White Mountain Huts, New Hampshire. The White Mountains huts make welcome refuges from the area's notoriously high winds and unpredictable snowfalls any month of the year. Link two huts or even all eight by way of a maze of trails often so steep and weather-beaten that, to prevent erosion, trail crews construct quad-burning staircases with watermelon-shaped rocks. Advance bookings required. \$81 to \$89 nightly per person. www.outdoors.org