

stream crossing. 2) Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest: Take the Bristlecone Pine National Scenic Byway (Westgard Pass Rd/Hwy. 168) from Big Pine. About 13 miles up, the byway turns off at Cedar Flat just below Westgard Pass. There is a visitor's center at Schulman Grove about ten miles from the turnoff; dirt roads lead along the ridgeline from there, and short trails wind through the groves.

Useful maps: All of them; this is a huge area. Contact White Mountain Ranger Station (798 N. Main St. in Bishop; 760-873-2500). Natural History of the White-Inyo Range (Clarence Hall, Jr., editor) is also useful.

Sierra Nevada mountains

Do not miss a high Sierra trail run if you're in Bishop between July 1 and early October. For trail maps, books, and useful information, visit the White Mountain Ranger Station at 798 N. Main Street in Bishop. If you're not interested in maps or information, then simply drive 15 to 20 miles west from Bishop on West Line Street/Hwy. 168 and follow signs to South Lake, Sabrina, Tye Lakes, or North Lake. No matter which trailhead you pick, you're likely to find yourself standing next to a blue or turquoise alpine lake a few miles from the trailhead.



Hungry Packer Lake

A few tiny notes on trail running:

Water: Running out of water on a hot day can ruin a nice run. So can giardia. If you're not certain about the location or quality of water sources, bring your own or bring a water treatment system. Don't forget to supplement water intake with electrolytes. (Pretzels will do in a pinch.)

Waste: Imagine intestinal obstruction in ground squirrels who've eaten syrup-coated plastic gel packets--not a pretty picture. Pack out your trash (and a little extra, if you have room). If you must poop, please bury it six to eight inches deep and more than 200 feet from water and trails (further if you're upslope). Pack out toilet paper.

Snakes: Poisonous snakes (except coral snakes) usually have triangular heads. All snakes are likely to be far more afraid of you than you of them. If you encounter a rattlesnake, back well away and go around.



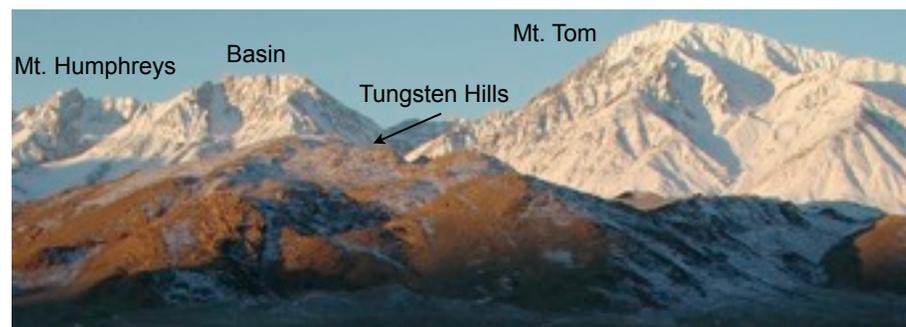
A young rattlesnake--note wedge head and slit pupil. If you can see this much detail, you are too close.

A gopher snake--note round pupil and relatively cylindrical head. Gopher snakes will sometimes imitate rattlers by shaking their tails in leaves to make a rattling noise.



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Bishop area trail running: a quick-and-dirty overview



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You are here.

If the weather's willing and you're able, it's possible to run from the outskirts of Bishop (elevation approx. 4,300') to the crest of the White mountains or the Sierra Nevada mountains (up to about 14,000') without touching asphalt. It's even possible to have fun.

In winter and spring, when skis are preferable to running shoes for reaching ridgelines, lower-altitude running in the Owens Valley offers blue skies, pleasantly cool temperatures, and plenty of opportunities to startle deer. Summer and fall offer perfect temperatures in the high country or, if you prefer, heat training and early-morning running opportunities on the valley floor.

Owens River and surroundings

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power owns much of the land on the valley floor, particularly land adjacent to the Owens River. Happily for trail runners, the agency is generous with public access. Dirt roads and occasional footpaths connect central Bishop to Pleasant Valley and the Tungsten Hills alongside irrigation canals and through alkali meadows, sagebrush scrub, and (on alluvial fans) high desert vegetation. To avoid injuries on both sides, try not to startle grazing cattle. A couple of highway crossings are necessary if you start from central Bishop. Bring your own water, or bring a really, really good filter.

One of several ways to get there: Drive north on Hwy. 395 from Bishop, past Hwy. 6 and past the Barlow Lane intersection next to the Rite-Aid shopping area. Turn right (north) on Brockman and drive north (past Dixon Lane) to the end of the road, where Brockman turns to dirt and forks left and right to an unlabeled dirt road (River-side Drive). Bear right (east) at the fork and take the very first left past the barbed wire fence. Park close to the canal and explore to your legs' content.

Useful maps and other info: Fish Slough 7.5" topo map. Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (300 Mandich Street in Bishop) can be contacted for recreational information at 760-872-1104.

Volcanic Tablelands

If you want the best big view of the Owens River the Bishop area offers, visit the pink tuff bluff that rises above Chalk Bluff Road north of Bishop. Dirt roads across the tablelands stretch north of the Owens River all the way to Benton Crossing Road. Be warned: This is not the place to do a long run unless you spend most of it close to

Casa Diablo or approach the tablelands from the east--lovely, unobstructed views of Casa Diablo from the southern edge of the tablelands can also mean a little too much of the same view for too long. Above all, bring your own water. A few small trickles form near Chidago Canyon during very wet winters, but the water tends to be only lip deep.



A snowy day on the tablelands.

One of several ways to get there: From Hwy. 395/Main Street in Bishop, drive north and bear right on Hwy. 6 just past the Smart 'N' Final/Von's/K-Mart shopping center. About one-and-a-third miles past the Hwy. 6 turnoff, turn left onto Five Bridges Road and drive north (right). The road bears north, merges with Jean Blanc, and then bears west past a gravel quarry to the intersection of Chalk Bluff Road, Fish Slough Road, and Casa Diablo Road. Park at the pull-out area and run up Casa Diablo Road for fast access to the tablelands.

Useful maps and other info.: Chidago Canyon, Fish Slough, and/or Casa Diablo 7.5" topo maps; call the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field office (351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop) at 760-872-5000 for more information.

Tungsten Hills

In winter and spring, the Tungsten Hills offer warm granitic gravel and dirt roads, sporadic but great views of the Sierra Nevada, steep elevation gains and losses, and surprise opportunities to see large herds of mule deer and flocks of mountain bluebirds wintering in the area. Bring your own water--Horton Creek flows down and west of the Tungsten Hills, but it's a long run to the creekside.

How to get there: Drive north out of Bishop on Hwy. 395, slightly more than 4.5 miles past Barlow Lane and the Rite-Aid shopping center. Turn left on Ed Powers Road and right on Sawmill Road. Just past the turn-off for Millpond Recreation Area (on the left), you'll see a small metal shed on the right side of the road. Park in the pull-off area across the road from the shed and explore the network of dirt and granitic sand roads leading into the Tungsten Hills to your south and west.

Useful maps and other info.: Bishop, Tungsten Hills, and Rovana 7.5" topo maps. Contact BLM field office (351 Pacu Lane in Bishop) at 760-872-5000.

Buttermilk country and Buttermilk Road

Big granite boulders, streams, meadows, and views abound on the sloping alluvial fans at the knees of the Sierra Nevada. If you like to boulder, bring your climbing shoes for a combined running and bouldering session on and off the dirt roads that branch off Buttermilk Road, just west of Bishop. There are dozens of miles of opportunity here, some of which connect from the Tungsten Hills and others which



connect to trails leading to Mt. Tom and Basin Mountain. Although it's possible to simply dip your bottle in local creeks here for water, it's advisable to bring some sort of filtration system to avoid experiencing runs of a different sort.

How to get there: Drive west on West Line Street from Bishop past the Community College and Ed Powers Road. About 2.5 miles past Ed Powers Road, turn right on Buttermilk Road, which is a dirt road. Once you're on Buttermilk Road, multiple dirt roads branch off to delightful places (hint: don't leave Buttermilk Road until about a mile from the West Line/Hwy. 168 turnoff if you want to start out going uphill).

Useful maps and/or info: Tungsten Hills 7.5" topo map. Call or go by the Inyo National Forest Service White Mountain Ranger Station (798 N. Main St. in Bishop; 760-873-2500) for camping information and maps, or see www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/.

Lower Rock Creek

This is simply one of the best multi-season trail runs on the east side. Lower Rock Creek rises through the tuff north of Bishop. The trail stays close to the creek most of the way up and winds through water birch, cottonwood, Jeffrey pine, piñon, and aspen and (in May and June) past bright yellow, white, orange, pink, and purple displays of various lilies, buckwheat species, larkspur, and others. Don't miss it in spring or fall; run in the early morning or late afternoon in summer. Water's readily accessible most of the way, but bring your water treatment of choice--it's a high use area, popular with mountain bicyclists and fisherfolk.

How to get there: Drive north on 395 from Bishop more than five miles past the Ed Powers turnoff to the Paradise/Lower Rock Creek/Pine Creek Road exit. Turn left off the highway and take an immediate right on Lower Rock Creek Road. Drive about two miles north and park across the road from Paradise Lodge. Step over the chain to the right of Paradise Lodge (close to the signs that say "No Trespassing" and "Bicyclists and hikers welcome.") Follow the dirt road to the creek crossing; there is a small wooden bridge just to the left of the crossing. From there, follow the dirt road to the trail.

White-Inyo Range

The White and Inyo mountains rise about 10,000 feet above the Owens Valley, host bighorn sheep and 4,000-plus year-old bristlecone pines (don't miss the ancient bristlecone groves on the ridge if you're in the area in summer or fall), and offer surprisingly pleasant runs for the altitude. In winter and spring, choose lower-altitude dirt roads that begin at the western toes of the Whites and rise slowly to the summit. Silver Canyon, for example, offers plenty of stream crossings, impressive wildflower blooms, and the occasional opportunity to observe bighorns skipping lightly up canyon walls as you labor up the dirt road below them. (Note: Don't bring your dogs, unless you're certain they're not interested in large mammals.)

Ways to get there: 1) Silver Canyon. From Bishop, drive north on 395 and bear right on Hwy. 6. Drive less than four miles to the Laws/Railroad museum exit and turn right. Drive about 2.5 miles up and park just below the first

A Great Basin fence lizard suns in the White Mountains.

