

La Sportiva Ouray Mountain Trail Run

Detailed Course Description

For more information, go to www.ouraytrailrun.com

SEGMENT 1 (Starting Line to Silvershield Trailhead (TH))

Description: The starting line is at the Ouray Hot Springs Park. The starting elevation is approximately 7,650'. Head south from the park along the river and cross the flume on a footbridge. At 9th Avenue turn left (east) and then immediately turn right (south on 2nd Street). Turn right (west) on 7th Avenue to Oak Street. Turn right (north) on Oak Street for 1.2 miles to the Silvershield TH on the left.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *A great way to start the race - an easy warm-up on about a mile and a half of roads before the real climbing starts.*

SEGMENT 2 (Silvershield/Twin Peaks/Oak Creek Trails)

Description: This segment is 4.2 miles. The Silvershield TH is at 7,600' elevation, the high point of this segment is 9,300', and the Oak Creek/Twin Peaks TH is at 8,200'. The start of the Silvershield Trail is fairly steep, but after 0.3 mile you come to an overlook and memorial with an imposing view of numerous old mines across the valley. The trail ascends into the forest, reaching a junction with the Oak Creek Trail at 1.1 miles. Follow the left fork another 0.3 mile where the trail again gives good views across the valley. After passing Rock of Ages Mine, you will come out in the open at 2 miles. Straight ahead will be a grand view of Ouray, the Uncompahgre Gorge, and Cañon Creek. Pick up the trail along the cliffs and you will find the junction with the Twin Peaks Trail at 2.3 miles.

From here the trail climbs briefly to its high point and then descends to Oak Creek. Watch out for high water in the creek, which can make the crossing dangerous. From the creek the trail climbs back out of the Oak Creek Gorge to the intersection with the Oak Creek Trail. This intersection is 1 mile from the Twin Peaks/Silvershield trail junction. Bear left at this intersection and follow the Oak Creek Trail down for 0.9 mile to its trailhead. At 0.3 mile from the last intersection is a big slab rock giving an overlook of Cañon Creek and on up to U.S. Mountain.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *Where the real work begins! The initial ascent up the Silvershield Trail is steep, and can be loose in some spots. Although the trail is solid, there is some exposure on your right side as you ascend.*
- ✓ *After toughing out the first mile, the trail travels along a series of north-south trending natural benches. You will find easier traveling and fantastic views to your left and straight ahead.*
- ✓ *The section along the cliffs before the Twin Peaks trail junction gives you perhaps the best views of the race – enjoy as you recover from a couple miles of climbing on the Silvershield Trail, and before you begin a switchbacking descent towards the Oak Creek crossing.*

- ✓ *After a brief ascent from the Oak Creek crossing you begin a long downhill segment on the Oak Creek Trail, and eventually into Ouray. This section of trail can be loose in some spots and the road from the trailhead to town is rocky.*

SEGMENT 3 (Oak Creek/Twin Peaks Trailhead to Ice Park Trailhead)

Description: From the Oak Creek/Twin Peaks TH head down 0.4 mile on South Pinecrest to Queen Street and turn right on Queen Street to Oak Street. Turn right at Oak Street. Then as the road curves left at 3rd Avenue, head to the right up the road to Box Canyon Falls and the Ouray Ice Park. Pass the Box Canyon Falls Visitor Center on your right and continue to the left up the road. As you approach the lower bridge, look for the stone powder house and run to the right of it up a steep hill that will take you to Camp Bird Road. You will run up Camp Bird Road briefly to the first road that takes off to the left, which is the beginning of the Ice Park Trail.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *Back on the road for a stretch!*
- ✓ *The climb from the stone powder house to the Ice Park Trail is short, but steep – experienced Imogene Pass Run racers will recognize this brief section as the early part of Jim Brown Hill.*

SEGMENT 4 (Ice Park Loop Trail)

Description: This segment is 1.9 miles. The west Ice Park TH is at about 8,100' elevation, the high point of this segment is 8,200', and the east Ice Park TH is at 8,000'. Follow this gently rolling road for about 0.8 mile until you reach a well marked penstock crossing consisting of wooden steps. Along the way you will see signs for various climbing areas in the Ouray Ice Park (New Funtier and South Park), and you may be tempted to take various left turns presented. However, stay on the main road/trail until you reach the well marked crossing point. Once you reach the crossing point, cross the penstock using the wooden steps and descend steeply for a short distance to the footbridge that crosses the Uncompahgre River. The trail then climbs steeply away from the river and then returns to a dirt road where you will turn left (north). The course follows this rolling road through stands of aspen trees for about a half mile. After a brief ascent, which takes you up close to Highway 550, make a left turn onto a single track portion of the trail which winds back down to the Camp Bird Road. The final 0.1 mile of the loop is very steep as it descends to Camp Bird Road and the east Ice Park TH.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *The Ice Park Loop Trail is a popular route among local runners for its close proximity to town, easy running terrain, and excellent views.*
- ✓ *Watch for a series of three cables strung across the route about three quarters of a mile in from the Ice Park Loop Trailhead. The cables are well marked but may still catch you by surprise. These cables support the penstock from the adjacent cliff wall and are actually about 100 meters from the penstock crossing described above.*
- ✓ *The footbridge over the Uncompahgre River is well constructed, totally solid, and is one of the many interesting features you will encounter during the race.*

SEGMENT 5 (Ice Park Trailhead to Baby Bathtubs Trailhead)

Description: From the east Ice Park TH head down Camp Bird Road to the Box Canyon Falls road and turn left over the lower bridge. Continue back down the Box Canyon Falls road, which you came up in Segment 3, to 3rd Avenue. Turn right (east) on 3rd Avenue and cross Main Street to 6th Street. Turn left (north) on 6th Street to 5th Avenue. At 5th Avenue turn right (east) and head up the trail at the 5th Avenue TH. At the Amphitheater Campground road leave the trail and turn right and head down the road to the Baby Bathtubs TH on your left.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *Another jaunt on the roads through town – this section will give you a chance to cruise a little before your next big climb.*
- ✓ *The section up from the 5th Avenue TH to the Amphitheater Campground road is a challenge. Although no steeper than the initial part of the Silvershield Trail, it is still a grind and the trail surface is loose in places. The climb is also out in the open and faces southwest. On a sunny day, this climb can be a tad warm.*
- ✓ *The section on the Amphitheater Campground road to the Baby Bathtubs TH is some of the only continuous pavement you will see on the whole race – it is cruiser fast!*

SEGMENT 6 (Baby Bathtubs/Portland/Cascade Trails to Lower Cascade Falls)

Description: This segment is 3.9 miles. The Baby Bathtubs TH is at 8,100' elevation, the high point of this segment is 9,200', and the Lower Cascade Falls TH is at 7,900'. The Baby Bathtubs Trail is an easy trail that packs a lot of unusual scenery into a short distance. The distance to the Portland Trail junction is only 0.3 mile with an altitude gain of just 180 feet. The trail crosses the north fork of Portland Creek where water has carved "baby bath tubs" into the colorful rock of the streambed. The trail then follows the gorge of the main fork of Portland Creek with more interesting "photo op" spots until it joins the horse crossing trail below the footbridge over Portland Creek. Follow the horse crossing trail to the left until you intersect Portland Trail (you will not cross the creek).

On Portland Trail you will be mostly in forest, but with many viewing points along the way. The trail begins a gentle climb along a series of switchbacks through the forest, with overlooks of the Amphitheater. After two miles, you will reach a junction at the high point of the Portland Trail. The right fork takes you to the Portland Mine, while the left fork takes you to another junction with the Upper Cascade Trail. Follow the left fork as it descends gradually and then levels off in the forest. Drop again to the wide drainage crossing and then head uphill to the intersection with the Upper Cascade Trail. Stay to the left at this trail junction and continue downhill. At this point you are on the Cascade Trail which you will continue to follow downhill to a junction on your right with the Lower Cascade Trail. Turn sharply right to take the Lower Cascade Trail steeply downhill. You will see the Amphitheater Campground road appear on your left. Stay on the trail to the right of the road and continue steeply downhill for 0.4 mile to the trailhead at Lower Cascade Falls.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *Another locals' favorite. This trail segment is quite popular with local runners and mountain bikers in the summer, and cross-country skiers and snowshoers in the winter.*
- ✓ *The climb on the Portland Trail is almost a pleasure – smooth singletrack with generous switchbacks. The trail winds in and out of evergreen and aspen forests, opening occasionally for fantastic views of the Amphitheater, Ouray, and the east end of the Sneffels range.*
- ✓ *Sections of the Cascade Trail descent are steep and loose – watch your footing! The final descent to Lower Cascade Falls contains many tight switchbacks.*
- ✓ *The Amphitheater area consists of a whole series of trails so pay attention to trail signs and race markings.*
- ✓ *The Lower Cascade Falls are a Ouray landmark – catch a brief glimpse as you cruise to the final segment.*

SEGMENT 7 (Lower Cascade Falls to Finish Line)

Description: From the trailhead follow the social trail downhill towards the left, which takes you onto 8th Avenue. Follow 8th Avenue west and continue across Main Street. Head right (north) on the sidewalk on the west side of Main Street and finish back at the Hot Springs Park.

Tips for Runners:

- ✓ *Back on the roads for good, and almost finished.*
- ✓ *8th Avenue is surprisingly steep, and you may be a little fatigued at this point – watch your step as you finish the race.*

Note: Trail description information is courtesy of the Ouray Trail Group (www.ouraytrails.org).

The Ouray Mountain Trail Run course travels through the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests under a special use permit issued by the U.S. Forest Service.