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Best Trail Running Shoes for Women of 2024

By [Meg Carney](#)



Edited by [Marlo Jappen Porto](#)

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Proper trail running shoes are essential for optimal performance. They're specifically designed to tackle rugged terrain and challenging trails while providing comfort and injury prevention.

From superior traction and stability to cushioning and durability, we'll explore the features that set trail running shoes for women apart. Whether you're a seasoned trail runner or just starting your journey, get ready to find the perfect pair of shoes to elevate your outdoor excursions.

Meg Carney, the author of this piece and hiker and trail runner of more than a decade, provides expert tips for choosing the best trail running footwear and details her top picks.

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Best Overall

HOKA Torrent 3 »



PROS:

- ✓ Dependable brand
- ✓ Versatile
- ✓ Form-fitting comfort
- ✓ Multi-directional traction
- ✓ Good value for the price

CONS:

- ✗ May be too cushioned for some
- ✗ Lacks sensitivity to the trail

Buy From HOKA

The HOKA Torrent 3 trail running shoe is our best overall trail running shoe for women. It offers all-day comfort and the cushioned midsole provides a responsive ride, effortlessly supporting long-distance runs.

The sticky rubber and multidirectional lugs give the runner a reliable grip on any terrain. They grip well on muddy, wet surfaces and abrasive surfaces, and the lugs maintain their durability.

While [HOKA](#) excels in comfort, some may initially find the lace bed and toe box slightly narrow. What's interesting about these shoes, however, is that they mold to the foot with wear to offer a personalized fit.

The Torrent 3 provides comfort, traction, and versatility for runners tackling different terrains and distances. Whether you're embarking on a short trail run or a long-distance adventure, these shoes offer the support and performance you need to confidently conquer your trail of choice.

Specs:

List Price:	\$130
Weight:	7.5 ozs
Drop:	5 mm
Sizes:	5-11

[Buy From HOKA »](#)

Best Budget

Asics Trail Scout 3 »



PROS:

- ✓ Durable for the price
- ✓ Good for road-to-trail transition runners
- ✓ Optimal under-foot comfort
- ✓ Secure fit

CONS:

- ✗ Not the most lightweight
- ✗ Long break-in period

[Buy From ASICS](#)

The Asics Trail Scout 3 combines affordability, comfort, durability, and performance. Featuring Asics' renowned gel cushioning technology in the midsole, these shoes offer exceptional shock absorption and support, ensuring a comfortable run on rough terrain. The sturdy outsole features an

aggressive lug pattern to provide superior traction, and it’s suitable for various surfaces from muddy trails to rocky terrain.

One of the standout features of the Trail Scout 3 is its value and durability for an affordable price. This pair has a supportive and secure fit thanks to the adjustability of the upper and lacing system. Runners can expect a snug yet comfortable feel that keeps the foot securely in place, minimizing slippage and boosting stability on uneven terrain.

Some users may find the shoe slightly narrow, so try them before purchasing or size up a half-size.

Specs:

List Price:	\$65
Weight:	9 ozs
Drop:	10 mm
Sizes:	5-12

[Buy From ASICS »](#)

Best for Long Distance

Topo Athletic Ultraventure 3 »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Versatility for long distances on road or trail
- ✓ Lighter than the previous Ultraventure model
- ✓ Reinforced and durable materials
- ✓ Excellent comfort for varying terrain

CONS:

- ✗ Breathability could be improved
- ✗ Tongue is short and moves around some

[Buy From Amazon](#)

The Topo Athletic Ultraventure 3 is the ideal crossover between trail and road and is adequate for long distances on varying terrain. The spacious toe box makes these shoes roomy and allows for natural toe splay, reducing the risk of blisters and discomfort during long runs. The multidirectional lugs on the durable outsole offer exceptional traction on the trail.

These shoes have reinforced overlays and sturdy materials for long-lasting durability and protection against the elements. Because of these features,

you may find the upper lacking in breathability, so, depending on the climate, they may not be the best hot-weather running shoes. Despite their rugged construction, the Ultraventure 3 remains surprisingly lightweight, allowing for agile and responsive movement on the trails.

Specs:

List Price:	\$150
Weight:	8.3 ozs
Drop:	5 mm
Sizes:	6-11

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Steep Climbs

Saucony Peregrine 13 »



PROS:

- ✓ Optimal traction for steep inclines
- ✓ Rock plate for added protection
- ✓ Wide sizing options are available
- ✓ Snug fit to reduce movement while running

CONS:

- ✗ Arch is a bit high
- ✗ Outsole and toe cap durability could be improved

[Buy From Amazon](#)

The Saucony Peregrine 13 offers reliable traction, comfort, and durability on steep, rugged terrain. The outsole and multidirectional lugs provide the necessary grip and stability for various surfaces and going up or down inclines. A rock plate adds even more protection for your feet if running on rocky trails. This pair’s lightweight design ensures agility and responsiveness, allowing for nimble footwork and quick transitions on the trails.

Thanks to its well-cushioned midsole and spacious toe box, the Peregrine 13 delivers a comfortable fit. The range of sizing options includes wide feet to fit a broader range of runners. Constructed with durable materials and reinforced overlays, this pair is a solid match for steep inclines.

Specs:

List Price:	\$140
Weight:	8.1 ozs
Drop:	4 mm
Sizes:	5-12

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Wet Conditions

La Sportiva Cyklon Cross GTX »



PROS:

- ✓ Designed for cold, wet runs
- ✓ Removes the need to wear gaiters
- ✓ Secure and adjustable fit
- ✓ Waterproof design

CONS:

- ✗ Overkill for warm weather running
- ✗ High price point

[Buy From La Sportiva](#)

The La Sportiva Cyklon Cross GTX offers unparalleled traction, waterproofing, and durability for extreme trail conditions, making it ideal for

wet and technical runs. A waterproof Gore-Tex membrane and ankle-high design provide exceptional protection from the elements.

The lightweight BOA Fit System ensures a secure and easy-to-adjust fit, adding to its appeal for cold, wet weather. With this system, you can adjust the fit without removing gloves – simply move a dial to tighten or loosen the shoes. These are considerably pricier than average trail running shoes, but performance in adverse weather and terrain may make the cost worth it for year-round trail runners.

Specs:

List Price:	\$245
Weight:	12.5 ozs
Drop:	8 mm
Sizes:	7-14

[Buy From La Sportiva »](#)

Best for Wide Feet

ALTRA Lone Peak 7 »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Spacious toe box
- ✓ Improved durability from previous models
- ✓ Improved traction
- ✓ Exceptional comfort
- ✓ Forefoot rock plate

CONS:

- ✗ Zero-drop design isn't for everyone
- ✗ Lack of heel cushioning

[Buy From Altra](#)

The Altra Lone Peak 7 women's trail running shoe is a beloved choice among ultra-distance runners and hikers for comfort and durability. Featuring 23 millimeters of cushioning throughout the midsole and an extra-wide toe box, it allows for natural foot movement and toe splay. The stitch-less upper provides a secure fit without feeling overly restrictive, balancing support and freedom of movement.

These shoes have a zero-drop design, meaning there's no difference in height between the forefront of the shoe and the heel, which may require some adjustment for those new to this type of shoe. While the lack of heel

cushioning can initially strain the Achilles tendon, proper training can alleviate discomfort over time. Overall, the Lone Peak 7 is recommended for runners and hikers seeking a comfortable trail shoe with a wide toe box that prioritizes foot health and natural movement.

Specs:

List Price:	\$150
Weight:	9.2 ozs
Drop:	0 mm
Sizes:	5.5-12

[Buy From Altra »](#)

Best Zero-Drop

ALTRA Superior 5 »



PROS:

- ✓ Highly sensitive to trail features
- ✓ Great lightweight trail shoe
- ✓ Inclusive sizing options
- ✓ Wide toe box for more natural foot performance

CONS:

- ✗ Zero-drop shoes aren't for everyone
- ✗ May lack the protection desired for more technical trails

[Buy From Amazon](#)

The ALTRA Superior 5 offers a lightweight and natural trail running experience. The wide toe box and zero drop allow for natural foot movement. The minimalist design promotes a low-to-the-ground feel, while the sticky rubber outsole with an intensive lug design offers adequate traction on the trail. Additionally, the breathable mesh upper keeps your feet cool and dry during intense runs, keeping you comfortable.

Some users may find the cushioning insufficient, particularly on longer runs or rough terrain. However, for those who prefer zero-drop footwear, the ALTRA Superior 5 remains a solid choice because it offers users a lightweight and natural trail running experience.

Specs:

List Price:	Start at \$79.99
Weight:	7.5 ozs
Drop:	0 mm
Sizes:	5.5-12

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

The Bottom Line

When looking for a pair of trail running shoes, make sure to find a brand and type of shoe that works with the intensity and conditions of your preferred trails. Our top pick is the HOKA Torrent 3 because of its versatility. It works well for both wet surfaces and rocky terrain thanks to its multidirectional lugs, which provide excellent grip. Additionally, the Torrent 3 molds to the user's feet over time and its cushioning delivers much-needed comfort for long-distance trails.

Things To Consider When Buying Trail Running Shoes

Selecting the ideal trail running shoes for your needs requires careful consideration. The right shoe prioritizes fit and features like traction and protection. The type of running, terrain, and climate influences the best shoe design.

Below, we overview the essential factors to consider while shopping for the best trail running shoes for your next adventure.

Size and Fit: Choosing the best size and fit in a trail running shoe for women is essential for comfort, performance, and injury prevention. Dana Vander Wal, an athletic trainer, sees running sports injuries often. "Improper shoe fitting (too big or too small) and shoes not made for running tend to be the biggest culprits for shoes causing injuries," she says.

To find your fit, begin by measuring both feet. Some brands may provide an online sizing guide with detailed instructions on how to measure your feet, but you can also consult a shoe expert at a local running store. If your feet vary in size, opt for the larger measurement. Consider factors such as toe length, foot width, and arch height, as these can all impact how a shoe fits and feels while running.

When trying on shoes, keep about a thumb's width of space between your longest toe and the shoe's end to accommodate swelling and downhill running. Pay attention

to how the shoe feels across the forefoot, midfoot, and heel, ensuring a snug but not overly tight fit. Experiment with different lacing techniques to customize the fit further. Try shoes on later in the day when your feet may be slightly swollen, mimicking conditions during a run, and wear the same socks you typically run in as well. Lastly, walk or jog around the store to assess comfort, stability, and pressure points.

Weight: Choosing the right weight in a trail running shoe for women depends on running style, terrain, and personal preferences. Lighter shoes offer better agility and responsiveness, making them ideal for faster-paced runs and technical terrain. They minimize fatigue over long distances and promote a more natural running feel. However, lighter shoes may sacrifice some durability and protection, particularly on rough trails or when carrying heavier loads.

Heavier shoes provide more stability, support, and protection against rugged terrain and obstacles. They're better suited for runners who prioritize durability and require extra cushioning for longer runs. Consider your running needs, preferences, and the specific conditions of your trails to find the optimal balance between weight, performance, and comfort in your trail running shoes. Trying on different weights and styles can help you determine which shoe best suits your needs.

Materials and Durability: Look for shoes made from durable yet lightweight materials – such as synthetic overlays and reinforced mesh – to withstand abrasion and provide breathability. The outsole material and tread pattern should be designed for optimal traction on various terrain types. Choose shoes with protective features such as toe caps and rock plates to shield against rocks, roots, and debris.

Brian Metzler, expert running shoe tester and author of Kicksology, mentioned that for trail running specifically, injuries from features such as rocks, roots, and uneven terrain are common. To minimize these, he recommends looking for a pair of trail running shoes that are more durable, and feature rock plate and an outsole with lugs. “Most trail running shoes have a reinforced upper to prevent sidewall abrasions from scuffing a large boulder with the side of your foot and may also have a reinforced toe-box to prevent stubbed toes or toe bang,” he says.

The stitching and construction quality can also influence the shoe's longevity under challenging conditions. When evaluating durability, keep in mind your running style and the specific demands of your trails. While heavier-duty shoes may offer superior

durability, they may sacrifice some agility and responsiveness. Most trail running shoes should last several hundred miles before they begin to break down, and whenever possible, look for a manufacturer's prediction or mileage rating to get a good idea of how long they should last.

Cushioning and Support: Shoes with ample cushioning in the midsole are designed to absorb impact and provide shock absorption while running. Most shoe cushioning reduces strain on joints and muscles during long runs, but how much cushion is needed is largely up to personal preference.

Metzler explains that an ideal level of cushioning depends on what you're comfortable with and how you can maneuver your feet tactically on the trails. He says, "So, for very thin shoes, typically those are lighter, faster, and more race-oriented for shorter distances, but at the same time, they don't have the protection. Your feet are much more exposed. On the other hand, more of a cushion can provide comfort and energy return and help cover up the sharper things on the trail."

Consider your pronation type and arch height when selecting the level of support necessary, opting for shoes with appropriate stability features such as medial posts or arch support for those who overpronate, meaning their ankle rolls inward and downward with each step.

Prioritize shoes with a supportive and secure fit around the heel and midfoot to prevent slippage and enhance stability on uneven surfaces. Experiment with different shoe models and brands to find the right balance between cushioning and support that caters to individual running needs and preferences.

Drop: Some may prefer a well-cushioned and supportive trail running shoe, while others may prefer less cushion and zero drop for a more minimalist barefoot shoe experience. Selecting the drop of a trail running shoe for women depends on factors such as running style, foot biomechanics, and personal preferences. The drop refers to the height difference between the heel and forefoot of the shoe. A higher drop typically promotes heel striking and may be suitable for runners who prefer more cushioning and support under the heel.

A lower drop encourages a more natural midfoot or forefoot strike and may benefit runners seeking a more minimalist or responsive feel. Minimalist, zero-drop shoes

typically demand more from different muscle groups and can take some time to get used to.

Vander Wal explains “zero-drop running shoes typically are only recommended for experienced runners. Ease into these kinds of shoes. Gradually getting shoes with less cushioning in them is the best way to get yourself used to the zero-drop shoes without injuries or setbacks.”

Consider your running mechanics and any history of injury when choosing the drop, as a drastic change in height may require a gradual transition to avoid strain or discomfort. According to Vander Wal, one of the benefits of zero drop shoes is that they allow you to strike your foot more under your center of mass and can limit overstriding when running.

She says that some zero-drop shoes can mean a lower tendency of injuries, but can also be harder on the knees due to the low amount of cushion and lower shock absorption. They can help shin splints more due to having less stress on the anterior portion of your leg, but then can put more stress on the posterior portion of your leg, potentially causing issues with your calves and Achilles tendons.”

Experiment with different drop heights to find the optimal balance between comfort, performance, and injury prevention that aligns with individual needs and running goals.

Lugs and Traction: The lugs and traction of trail running shoes are crucial for maintaining stability and grip on varied terrain. According to Metzler, “Road running shoes can work for some trails, but the biggest difference in trail running shoes is that you’ll get better traction and slightly more protection. The additional traction helps you put in less energy and less effort.”

Consider the type of trails you'll be running on – rocky, muddy, or technical – and choose shoes with lugs that match those conditions. Opt for shoes with aggressive, multidirectional lugs for rugged trails with loose or uneven surfaces that provide maximum traction and grip. Look for deeper lugs made of durable rubber compounds that offer superior durability and traction on challenging terrain.

The spacing and pattern of the lugs, as well as the flexibility of the outsole, can also influence traction and responsiveness. Test different shoes on various surfaces to

assess their grip and stability, and choose the option that best suits your running style and the specific demands of your trails.

How We Chose the Best Trail Running Shoes

The author, Meg Carney, is an experienced trail runner and hiker, putting in trail miles in remote locations across the U.S. As someone who either trail runs or hikes almost daily, she has gone through several pairs of running shoes and worked her way around different styles and features to find the best-fitting options for her feet. Additionally, Carney consulted with Brian Metzler, an editorial running shoe tester since 1998 and author of the book [Kicksology](#), and [Dana Vander Wal](#), an athletic trainer with a background in running-based sports and pre-therapy kinesiology.

WHY SHOULD YOU TRUST US?

[Meg Carney](#), the author of this piece, has been a freelance writer for outdoor-focused publications and brands for more than seven years and has a distinct passion for sustainable product design and environmental advocacy. Her experience on the trail and her background as a product journalist covering outdoor gear and equipment gives her a unique perspective on what to look for while shopping for the best trail running shoes for women.

Her work can be found in digital publications, including Field and Stream, Popular Mechanics, and GearJunkie, and her environmental journalism extends into podcast production with her original shows, Outdoor Minimalist and Forever Chemicals.

FAQ

What's the difference between hiking shoes and trail running shoes?



How long do trail running shoes last?



Are trail running shoes waterproof?**What is a rock plate?**

About Our Team



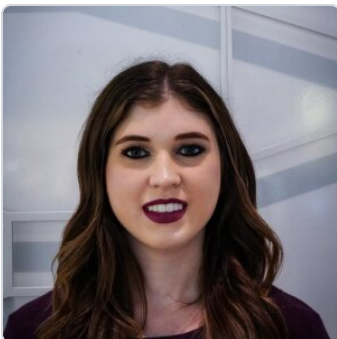
Meg Carney

Contributor



Meg Carney is an outdoor and environmental writer with a passion for environmental advocacy. She primarily covers topics within the outdoor industry ranging from the best new products and greenwashing to the scientific coverups of hazardous chemicals. Her work can be found in digital publications such as Field and Stream, Popular Mechanics, and GearJunkie, and her environmental journalism extends into

[Read more](#)



Marlo Jappen Porto

Former Editor



Marlo Jappen Porto is a former editor for U.S. News 360 Reviews, focusing on home goods. Prior to joining the team, she was a researcher at NBCUniversal, where she gathered compelling and relevant archival content for live broadcasts. In addition, she has spent years working as an editor and community journalist.

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