

Urban Running



During the winter, one of the most frequent questions I receive is: “Are you still running during the winter?” Since I started running in 2004, I have never considered taking the winter months off. I usually do the complete opposite and step up my training to new levels, putting in more miles during the winter months compared to the summer. Putting on holiday weight doesn’t become a worry and the result is a solid mileage base for the races in the new year. As of 2016, I’ve run year-round for more than twelve years.

But my approach is different during the winter. Many runners in Utah in recent years have enjoyed to continue to push up to the peaks in deep snow. Perhaps that is fun, but for me, it does not contribute much toward continued 100-mile race training. I move my training down into the valleys and find ways to do creative, interesting long urban runs.

During the winter and spring there are many fun, flat 100-mile or fixed-time races that become my focus and motivation for solid training during the colder months. As I continue to work hard, my fastest 100-mile times result. In 2016 at the age of 57, my 20:51 100-mile time at Jackpot 100 was the 4th fastest time in the world during 2016 for a runner age 57+. (Data from realendurance.com). All of my personal record times at all distances have been accomplished during the winter and spring. If I would have taken winter months off as most runners do, that would have never happened.

For me, urban pavement running has its place at times but must be carefully accomplished to avoid hard-surface injuries. I make sure I use max-cushioned shoes and listen carefully to my body to rest when needed. Recently I sat in the dentist chair with my mouth being poked at by a dental hygienist who told me she has finished about 15 marathons. She complained about injuries, but said that in a couple days she **must** run 17 miles because her training plan demanded it. I wanted to chastise her foolishness but the scraper she had in my mouth wouldn’t let me. If you run on pavement, you need to be even more careful about overuse injuries.

During most of the year I shake my head in wonder as I see runners every day pounding the pavement in wonderful weather when the trails are dry. But during the winter at times I will join them in the city. One of my most favorite times to run is in the early morning as a fresh new snow is falling with an inch or two on the ground. Everything is quiet. The running surface is soft and fast. All is white, with a distinct difference from our colorful, loud attention-grabbing world. Winter running even in the city can be wonderful with a unique experience to discover.

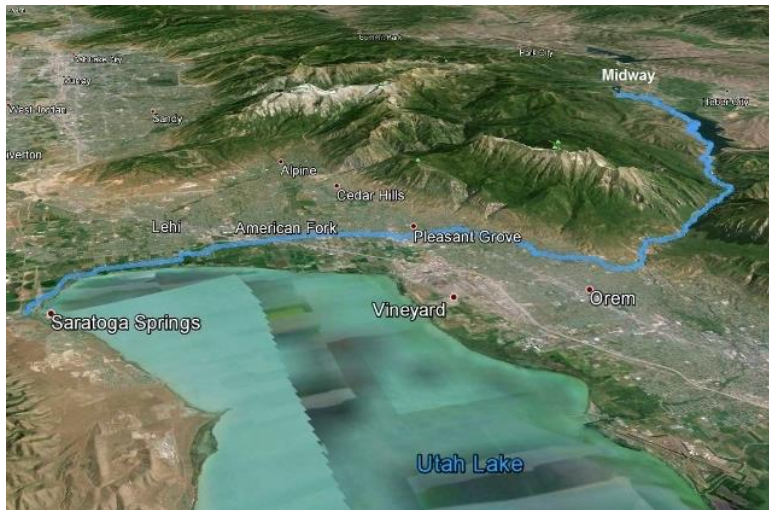
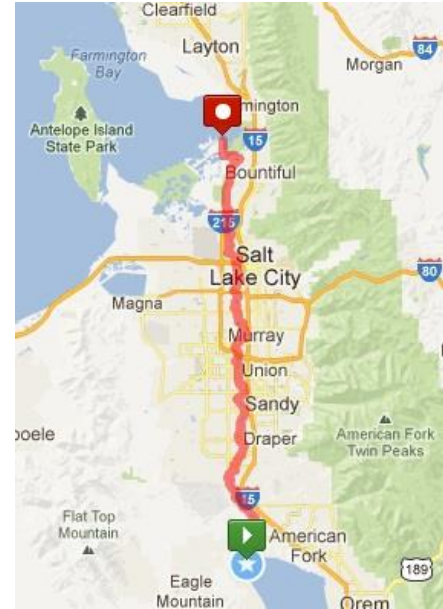


I enjoy searching for and finding long unique runs near or through the cities. A great benefit of the urban run are the stores and fast-food restaurants along that way that can act as aid stations. They can be a warm winter oasis that also allows me to run without carrying much.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

In 2012, I got the idea to run between the two largest lakes in Utah, Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake using mostly paved trails. The Jordan River in Utah meanders for more than 50 miles between the two lakes and the Jordan River Parkway Trail has been built over the years to follow closely by the river. As far as I could tell, no one had before attempted to run the trail end-to-end in one day. I decided to go further than that and link up with the Legacy Parkway Trail to reach the Great Salt Lake. This adventure was a very interesting urban run. In 2016, I went even further, linking up with the Rail Trail to reach Layton for 66 miles.

For many of these long urban runs, I will make use of mass transit for shuttles, running to or from train stations. Other times my kind wife will come and pick me up at the end of my run. Plotting a creative circular run in another approach I frequently do.



In 2015, with a family Christmas party scheduled 41 miles away in Midway. I considered, “Why drive, if I can run?”

I left my home at about 3:00 a.m. when it was 35 degrees with snow flurries. All was peaceful and quiet as I ran through the cities. I connected with a paved trail, the Murdock Canal trail in order to avoid any morning

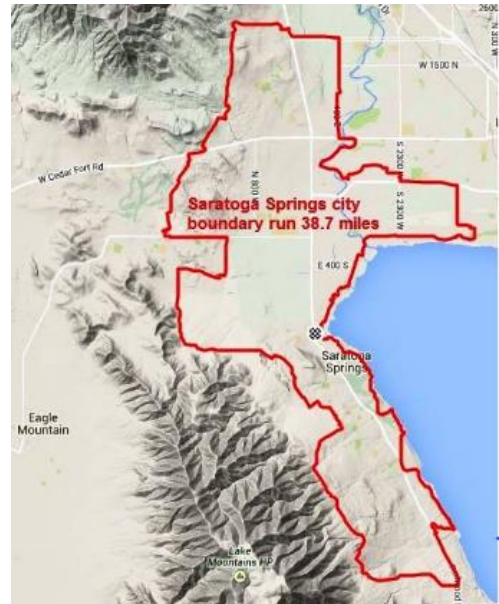
traffic and to minimize waiting at traffic lights. At the mouth of Provo Canyon I stopped at a convenience store to resupply and warm up for a few minutes. Running up Provo Canyon, I made use of the Provo River paved trail and then to avoid the busy highway ran on the snow covered Heber Creeper railroad bed giving me a new and interesting challenge. Finally I ran seven miles along the beautiful Deer Creek Reservoir to my destination, in time to clean up before the party.

Most of the time I come up with these ideas for long urban runs just a couple days before I run them. I get an idea that seems interesting and then look for the next available time to go accomplish it. During cold times, I can usually run the first 25-30 miles without needing to refill my bottles. I look for runs that will include a place to refill my bottles by mile 30.



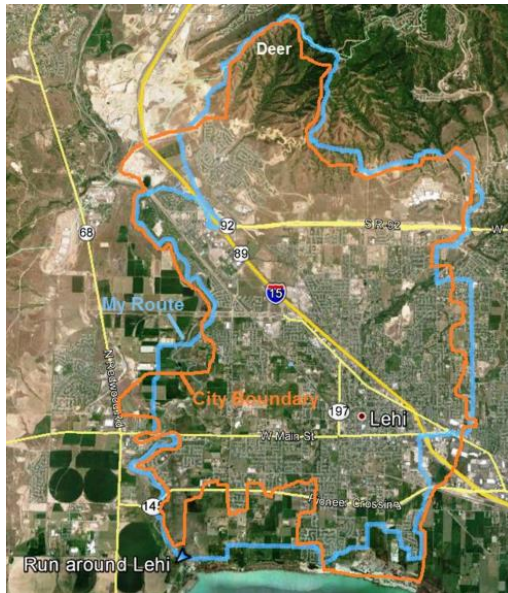
My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

During 2014 to keep my motivation high for running during the winter, I hatched the idea to run around the borders of my city, Saratoga Springs. This required careful research and planning to try to follow the boundaries as close as possible without too much crossing over private property. I tried to keep the city property inside my large loop. It turned out to be great fun and a navigation challenge. The run around Saratoga Springs turned out to be 38.7 miles.



Next, I ran around the city boundaries of Lehi, Utah for 33 miles. The boundaries were even more difficult to navigate. On the northern end I

had to climb up and run high snow-covered ridges and saw hundreds of deer. The east side was urban running. Finally, I ran around the city of American Fork, Utah for 20 miles. All the city boundary runs introduced me to roads and trails I had never been on before and there was plenty to see and experience. It made winter running interesting.



Run around Lehi

Another crazy strategy for a unique urban run is “maze running.” The challenge is to see if I can run a housing development run on every road possible without carrying a map with me. This requires some careful planning and memorization of the roads. Because this is so odd, I will do this during the pre-dawn morning so I won't be seen by local residents. I don't want anyone calling the cops because a suspicious guy is stalking their neighborhood.



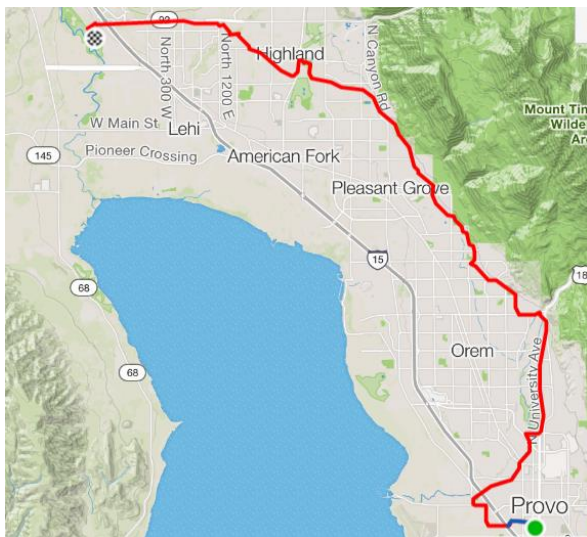
One morning I ran 11.6 miles through a half square mile of a maze of roads and did pretty well, only missing a couple road segments.

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2016, I ran for six hours at the oval and covered 37 miles. I concentrated on keeping most of my lap times near 2:45 or 10:00-minute-mile pace. This is a great place to do carefully controlled long fast training on a soft track.

I also look for rural/urban runs to do big loops, using the stores along the way. In 2016 I ran a very interesting 37-mile run that made use of 22 miles of canal roads. In Utah there are very many old canals that run through the large valleys to irrigate the farm fields with river or lake water. Usually there are nice dirt roads that run along these canals even through the cities. Sometimes they are blocked off by firm no-trespassing signs and gates, but most are still accessible and used by the public to run and walk. I wave to friendly farmers along the way and talk to the horses.



and starting my run at the Provo station on the south. I ran to the Provo River Trail, ran up river to the

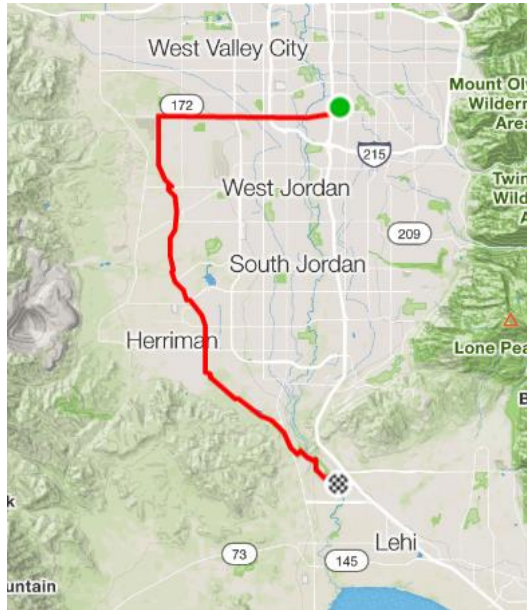
Another approach is to make use of indoor tracks. There are several that I have run on including the Legacy Center in nearby Lehi, and the indoor track at Brigham Young University. But the most interesting place to run indoors in Utah is the Utah Olympic Oval, the home of many skating events during the 2002 Winter Olympics. This unique venue includes a 442 meter track that runs around the ice oval. The USA teams train at the facility and usually you can run while watching them train. I've also seen China's team train there. 18 laps is about five miles. My GPS watch doesn't work inside, but I use the chronometer on my watch keep track of lap counts. As I was training for Across the Years in

For my urban runs, I do not like running on sidewalks and waiting at lights to cross intersections. Instead, I look for routes to connect networks of paved trails that result in very few road crossings but still provide the stores along the way. One favorite is in Utah County to connect the Murdock Canal trail with the Provo River trail. The Murdock Canal is now a buried canal with a nice paved trail on top. The Provo River trail runs near the Provo River as it makes its way to Utah Lake.

For this run, I choose my direction of travel based on the wind direction. A head wind, even a light breeze can be very chilly in the winter. I used the train as my shuttle, leaving my car at the Lehi station at the north,

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mouth of Provo Canyon and then connected with the Murdock Canal Trail for a total of 29 miles, stopping for a nice breakfast and lunch along the way.



In 2013, a new paved trail was opened that runs along 15 miles of the Mountain View Corridor on the southwest side of Salt Lake Valley. As of 2016 this trail still gets low use, but presents spectacular views of the Wasatch Mountains to the east. The local cities maintain the trail well. When I ran it end-to-end I was amazed to see that much of it had been plowed that morning when just a couple inches of snow fell.

I first left my car at the Lehi train station and rode the train to the Murray station. From there I decided to run along 54th south for eight miles on sidewalks to the start of the trail. I could have also taken a ride on the bus that runs regularly, but chose to run instead. The length of the trail was interesting. Sometimes it ran on top of a former railroad bed, other times right next to the highway. I stopped for lunch at a Smith's market at 114th South. For the last six miles of my run, I connected with a canal road to the Jordan River trail, and arrived back at the trail station.

Frequently old abandoned railroad beds are converted to paved trails. These can be great routes for urban runs. Such trails exist at the north end of Utah County in Lehi and the South end of Salt Lake County in Draper/Sandy. For one run, I put together a loop run using the rail trails and then connected with the Jordan River trail that runs through the heart of the valleys for a 24 mile route.

The Porter Rockwell Trail (or Sandy Trail) runs ten miles long all the way up to 84th South close to the Trax light rail line which can be used as a shuttle. There are many interesting options with miles of connecting trails to make this a great area for urban runs.

Don't stop running in the winter. Find creative routes in the city to keep your interest high and put in the miles.

