

THE ASPEN TIMES

Aspen the finish line for 125-mile trail race

By [Janet Urquhart](#)
[Aspen, CO Colorado](#)
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ASPEN — Endurance athletes from around the country and beyond will have a chance to see the Colorado high country in all its autumn splendor next fall with the debut of a six-day run that finishes in Aspen.

The inaugural TransRockies Run, sponsored by GORE-TEX, is expected to draw up to 150 teams of two for "a running experience like no other," according to the event's website. Runners will cover 125 miles and nearly 25,000 feet of overall vertical gain on a route that takes them through the White River and San Isabel National forests, from Beaver Creek to Aspen, via Leadville. The course follows a mixture of singletrack and forest roads, reaching elevations of 12,000 feet.

For those with a greater goal than simply finishing the run, \$20,000 in prize money will be up for grabs in four team categories: the open class, women, mixed and teams of men whose combined age is 80-plus years.

Similar runs and mountain biking events already take place in Europe and Canada; organizers approached Aspen with the plan to hold a run through the Colorado Rockies and found a receptive audience.

Aspen wasn't initially the finish point for the event until local representatives urged organizers to consider ending the Sept. 16-21 run in town as the finish date falls the day before the annual Golden Leaf Classic - a 13.3-mile half-marathon that takes runners on mountain trails from Snowmass Village to Aspen.

Though participants in the TransRockies Run might not have the energy to take part in the Golden Leaf the day after they arrive, the synergy created by holding the events back-to-back was too enticing to pass up, said Nancy Lesley, director of special events and marketing for the city.

"We asked if that was something they'd consider, and it was done in like 24 hours," she said.

"I don't know if there are some superstars out there who will say, 'Oh yeah, I just ran for six days, let's go for another day.' We're certainly not betting on it," Lesley said.

The TransrockiesRun takes participants from camp to camp, but the exact locales aren't detailed on the event's website.

"The actual route will remain secret until just before the event so that all competitors can maximize the adventure experience of entering something totally brand new," the website notes. The final route is subject to Forest Service approval.

Lesley said it's her understanding that the final leg of the run will bring participants down Smuggler Mountain Road. An event spokesman was not available for comment.

The website indicates racers will be fed and housed in "a tent city" and treated to hot showers each night. A mobile

medical team will follow the racers, and a TV crew will film footage of the run.

While the race is timed to coincide with the area's spectacular colors, as the aspen trees turn gold, there's a chance the landscape will be predominately white. Last year, an early-season snowstorm forced the first cancellation of the Golden Leaf Classic in the event's history.

Unpredictable weather aside, Lesley said she's hopeful the TransRockies Run will become an annual Aspen happening.

"Ideally, TransRockies will be here year after year, and this is something we can grow," she said.

News of the TransRockies event comes on the heels of the recent announcement of the Ride the Rockies route, which will bring 2,000-plus bicyclists to Aspen in June for the first time since the annual tour's inaugural ride in 1986.

For registration information on the TransRockies Run, go to www.transrockies.com/.

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[BACK](#) 