

## Final Heat

THIS YEAR'S FASTEST KICKS FOR EVERY KIND OF TERRAIN  
 BY LISA JHUNG AND CORY SMITH

**ASICS MetaSpeed Sky** \$250

Supershoes with carbon-fiber plates have topped our lists for the past two seasons. This fall, ASICS wins the race. Pro runner Sara Hall wore a prototype of this model when she finished second at the London Marathon in October 2020, and then again in December 2020, when she clocked the second-fastest marathon time by an American woman. For regular runners, the shoe promotes a faster pace with less effort by encouraging you to cover the same distance in fewer steps. How? With a combination of 33 millimeters (31 for women) of ultralight, nylon-based cushioning under the heel plus an innovative full-length carbon plate. The concave metal strip starts higher under the heel, then swoops low under the forefoot before rounding up again under the toe, resulting in a springy ride that increases its rebound the harder you run. The shoe seemed to bounce us forward with each foot strike, and one tester noticed that across a wide range of speeds and distances, he didn't feel any impact. Outsole rubber carried over from ASICS's trail-shoe line grips wet and dry roads fantastically, putting that energetic midsole combo into go mode. In short, this shoe will make you feel superhuman. 5.9 oz (women's, pictured) / 7 oz (men's); 5 mm drop





**BEST FOR LONG, SPEEDY ROAD RUNS**

**A. Hoka One One Rincon 3 \$115**

Those seeking Hoka’s signature plush feel without a bulky profile need look no further. The newest version of this trimmed-down neutral trainer is still quite soft, but it’s shockingly light on your feet and perfect for clocking all paces. The breathable 3-D mesh upper and thin asymmetrical tongue provide a secure fit that helps you maximize power in your stride without sacrificing comfort. Designers added more abrasion-resistant rubber along the outsole—a welcome boost to durability. But testers were hesitant to call the Rincon 3 responsive. The overly soft midsole lends itself more toward comfort miles than performance ones. Still, you won’t find an everyday trainer with a better weight-to-cushioning ratio. 6.2 oz (women’s) / 7.4 oz (men’s, pictured); 5mm drop

**BEST DAILY ROAD TRAINER**

**B. Brooks Ghost 14 GTX \$160**

No need to dodge puddles on soggy, dreary winter runs in the Ghost. Favoring mellow miles over speedy strides, this unpretentious workhorse—a waterproof version of Brooks’s bestselling neutral trainer—gets refreshed with more of the brand’s softest EVA midsole. Ghost 13 loyalists, fear not. Testers noticed few changes other than a somewhat softer and smoother ride. The lightweight GoreTex uppers kept our feet dry, while the neat, flat laces and graciously padded heel collars hugged our feet like warm blankets. Like the previous model, the 14 still boasts a 12-millimeter heel-to-toe differential. Overall, the verdict still stands: this is one of the best no-frills everyday shoes you can buy for wet wintry runs. 9.8 oz (women’s) / 10.7 oz (men’s, pictured); 12 mm drop

**BEST FOR ULTRARUNNING**

**C. Salomon Ultra Glide \$140**

Salomon’s first foray into maximum cushioning was an instant winner, courtesy of an uncharacteristically plush ride that still maintains the classic nimble Salomon trail style we love. Designers built it on a road-running last that’s more relaxed and comfortable than the shape of most trail-running shoes. Underfoot, a thick slab (32 millimeters in the heel for men, 26 for women) of Salomon’s lightest performance foam—an EVA and olefin compound—produces a bouncy ride. The engineered mesh upper with Salomon’s secure-fitting quicklace system and generously padded tongue and collar created a snug, cozy fit. Whether you go long, short, fast, or slow, this is the most comfortable Salomon shoe you can buy. 7.7 oz (women’s) / 9.2 oz (men’s, pictured); 6 mm drop



**BEST FOR WET ROAD RUNS**

**A. New Balance FuelCell Rebel v2** \$130

The FuelCell Rebel v2 comes about as close as possible to feeling like a carbon-plated shoe without actually using that material (or incurring the high price that typically comes along with it). The result is a fun and lively ride. Designers employed a new midsole material that's formed under extremely high pressure, yielding low density and major rebound. It had testers using words like springy, snappy, nimble, and fast. The cushioning around the heel collar joins an airy mesh upper for all-day comfort that's great for warm fall days, though you'll want thick socks to keep your feet comfortable when it's really cold. This is a great shoe for daily training, from speedy sessions to mid- and long-distance runs. 5.9 oz (women's, pictured) / 7.2 oz (men's); 6 mm drop

**BEST FOR SPEEDY TRAIL RUNS**

**B. Nike Air Zoom Terra Kiger 7** \$140

This once light and thin-soled speedster gained 0.7 ounces in men's sizes and 0.5 ounces in women's. In exchange for that modest weight penalty, you get more of Nike's most durable and responsive foam. Our test team applauded the thicker midsole, which has a segmented rock plate in the heel and air pockets in the forefoot, for soft landings and smooth, snappy takeoffs. Even with this beefier profile, the Kiger 7 maintains a fast and nimble ride, ready to tear up any terrain you unleash it on. A more voluminous upper accommodates a wider array of foot shapes and sizes but provides ample lockdown. Credit the thin, well-vented upper and dial-in lacing system, which hugs the foot for a powerful yet natural stride. 8.8 oz (women's, pictured) / 10 oz (men's); 4.5 mm drop

**BEST FOR SLOPPY TRAILS**

**C. The North Face Flight Vectiv Guard Futurelight** \$250

The North Face took its award-winning Vectiv trail-shoe platform, stripped away part of the upper, and added an outer ankle-height bootie made of waterproof, breathable material. We slogged through snow, spring runoff, and puddles, and our socks remained dry. Beyond that, the shoe delivers the same carbon-plated responsiveness that we loved from its warm-weather predecessor. The plate sits just beneath the heel and extends a bit around the heel to provide stability over rough terrain. Tiny strands of über-durable spectra integrated into the upper kept our feet from moving excessively, and five-millimeter rubber lugs gripped all manner of sloppy surfaces. 10.8 oz (women's, pictured) / 12.6 oz (men's) 6 mm drop