

Ashnola River

Vitals

Locale: Keremeos / Cathedral Provincial Park, British Columbia

What It's Like: Continuous river running in the hot and sunny Okanagan area of south central BC.

Class: IV

Scouting/Portaging: Easy - roadside.

Level: Visual only. Possible correlation with the Similkameen:
http://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/report_e.html?type=realTime&stn=08NL007

Time: 1-3 hours. Fast laps on the lower 6 km take 30 min.

When To Go: Early season high water snowmelt in May/June.

Info From: May 2014.

Other Beta: Fraser Valley Whitewater trip reports: <http://fraservalleywhitewater.com/?s=ashnola>

Description

The Ashnola River is a stream located in the Okanagan region of BC, an area not often associated with whitewater kayaking. Rising across the border in the US, the Ashnola drains Cathedral Provincial Park and flows north to join the Similkameen River near the town of Keremeos. The Ashnola is a unique river with moderate continuous class IV whitewater for miles that appeals to a wide range of boaters. The added bonus is the location in the Okanagan often means hot and sunny weather when the river is running.

There is no online gauge on the Ashnola. The river flows only from snowmelt in the spring and early summer in May and June. In very large snow years it's possible to stretch the season into July. There is a loose correlation with the Similkameen at Princeton gauge where you'll get a general idea on whether or not the rivers in the area are rising or falling. The river has a wide runnable range - the medium flow sweet spot produces a really fun class IV section of whitewater. The run is roadside and it tolerates high flows well but the difficulty and issues associated with a very continuous river increase accordingly. There is a stump in the river at the take out camp site that can be used as a visual gauge. See the photo at the bottom of this page to see what a medium flow looks like.

The Ashnola is found a few km west of Keremeos on the Crowsnest Highway (Highway 3). The easiest way to find your way to the whitewater is to follow the signs for Cathedral Provincial Park. Follow the road into the park. There is a great campsite at the 0 km marker (the first point the river is close to the road) where you'll also find the gauge stump. The furthest upstream put in is about 20 km up. You can access the river wherever you like - other popular put in points are at the 12 km and the 6 km markers. There is good camping all along the road up the river.

The general character of the Ashnola is continuous low to medium volume class IV rapids. It is all easily boat scoutable, and the run increases in difficulty as you go further down the river. Groups can start and stop at many locations along the length of the run, made easy by the fact the road is usually right next to the water. For reference, the Ashnola is a notch easier than the Upper Cheak in Whistler. The 20 km to 12 km access is the easiest stretch. Somewhere below the 12 km marker a significant tributary enters and the rapids become more interesting. At the 6 km marker is the largest rapid on the run called Sabertooth - it's easily visible on the shuttle. Excellent class IV rapids continue from here all the way to the take out. Running laps on the bottom 6 km are the best bang for your buck. Smash some laps and then kick back and enjoy the great camping!

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