

Ashlu Creek – Bottom Mile

Vitals

Locale: Squamish, British Columbia

What It's Like: The last hurrah of the Ashlu. Steep boulder piles that equate to difficult but good kayaking.

Class: V

Scouting/Portaging: Easy to moderate, at river level.

Level: Online gauge by Innergex: <http://www.innergex.com/kayak/en/ashlu-creek>

Time: 2-3 hours.

When To Go: No definite window - whenever water spills over the dam.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The runnable season of this section changed permanently because of a hydro project that came online in November 2009. The season is now limited to the difficult-to-predict times when water spills over the dam. There are no recreational releases that provide a flow appropriate for this section.

The Ashlu is truly a classic river. With section after section of diverse class IV-V whitewater, a long season that amounts to most of the year and a tributary that represents one of the best day trips you'll find in the whole province, it really has no peer. The very last section of whitewater on the Ashlu is a furiously steep pile of boulders - it's not the best kayaking on the river, but it's well worth doing to run some fun rapids and to soak in the great scenery.

The Bottom Mile is good when the Ashlu is at rock bottom flows. It used to be a reliable early/late season run, but now that the river is dewatered there is no definite window any more. It's fair to say it will run when a small amount of water is spilling over the dam. It seems that flows of 6 to 9 cms on the online gauge are usually good to go, however as the flow window is very narrow the tributaries between the dam and the put in can have a significant effect on flow meaning this isn't always correct. It is possible to have a great flow when the gauge reads nothing (baseline is about 2.5 cms) after a rain in the winter that only fills the low elevation tribs.

The closest town to the Ashlu is Squamish. From Squamish drive up the Squamish Valley, crossing over the Cheakamus River. Heading up the Squamish you'll eventually come to a big bridge on your left (the first one) over the river - this road gives access to the Ashlu Valley. The first thing you come to are twin bridges over the river - this can be your take out, or you can take out at the powerhouse just around the corner. To reach the put in, drive approximately 1.5 km up the steep hill and start at the first place the road comes close to the river. There is good parking near the flood warning siren. Remember, the river will look very low.

After starting out and running some rocky rapids in a wide riverbed you'll pass the footing of an old bridge. This is the indicator you're getting to the first major rapid, a cool 8 foot slot boof that is shallow. Once you drop over you're deposited in the canyon and the big boulder action begins. When you get out to scout after this first rapid you'll be able to see the take out far below - the river is as straight as an arrow. From here down are many good boulder rapids and bedrock drops, some quite challenging. Expect a lot of scouting and relatively easy portaging. Most people will portage something. Finally, after the rapids end check the astounding view upriver - it's a good one, and a fitting end to a river that is nothing less than classic.

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