

Cameron River

Vitals

Locale: Port Alberni, British Columbia

What It's Like: Excellent river-running with small canyons and bedrock rapids.

Class: IV at medium levels

Scouting/Portaging: Moderate - a few rapids would be difficult to walk.

Level: Visual gauge on the river near Cathedral Grove.

Time: 2-4 hours.

When To Go: After rain. Short snowmelt season in the spring.

Info From: Several visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The Cameron River is an amazing class IV run located between Parksville and Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, near the spectacular Cathedral Grove. From a tranquil start this river slowly picks up steam to run through several distinct canyons containing a lot of bedrock before you get to the cut trail back up to the road. There are great boofs, sweet lines, good scenery and a few short and tight bedrock mini-gorges that are top notch. Everything on the Cameron at normal flows is in the class IV range, but we wouldn't recommend this river to a crew that are maxed out on class IV - in the heart of the run the action is fairly stacked.

The Cameron runs after rainfall, and it has a short snowmelt season in the spring time. The Englishman River, which has an online Environment Canada gauge, can be used to get an idea of what flows are doing in the area. To make matters easy, a visual gauge was installed by the local paddling community on the river where it is near the highway to save driving in the logging roads to check the level. The Cameron is the river that runs through Cathedral Grove - on the west side of the Grove the river runs adjacent to the main road. The gauge is located across the river from an obvious dirt pull off. 4.5 on this gauge is low but still good fun. 5.5 is medium. At 6.5 and over is high water and the river gets accordingly more difficult.

The shuttle access is relatively easy. Heading west on route 4 out of Cathedral Grove brings you up a big hill. Passing a brake check area and the Port Alberni summit are the first reference points. After passing these and just as you start to descend down to Port Alberni there will be a dirt logging road on your left heading south that is marked with an "Arrowsmith" sign. Follow this road down along massive clear cuts. It will join the Cameron Main and you will want to keep left. This brings you up the river valley and eventually to a bridge over the Cameron, which is the put in. The take out is approximately 5 km back down the road at a small clear cut near the 11 km marker. This clear cut has a trail cut down to the river on the upstream end - a semi-obvious path leaves the parking and goes to the water. If you haven't done the run before we *highly* recommend walking to the river so you'll be able to recognize the take out from the water.

The Cameron starts off flat, which doesn't last for long. Things quickly pick up through some warm-up whitewater and before long you'll get to the first canyon section of the run. The character of the run stays constant through its whole length with many bedrock rapids interspersed with some bouldery stuff. The best part of the whole river are the short but defined mini gorges that are found throughout - they are awesome. Most of the run can be easily boat scouted - that which you can't see down is easy to scout from shore - keep a look out for wood.

Generally speaking, the second half of the run is a little harder - there is a bail out point half way down this is marked with flagging tape. This is where you'll find the most concentrated action. The last rapid is a bedrock mini gorge that exits the canyon as the valley walls fall away. After you pass this rapid the take out is found immediately on the left. Enjoy the steep walk up the hill, and go load up to do it again on this Island class IV classic.

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