

Hurley River Canyon

Vitals

Locale: Bralorne, British Columbia

What It's Like: An impressive canyon with good class V whitewater. A different feel from the typical Coast Mountain rivers.

Class: V

Scouting/Portaging: Easy to moderate - despite the size of the canyon, everything can be scouted and/or portaged.

Level: Online gauge: http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/graph/graph_e.html?stn=08ME027

Time: 3-5 hours.

When To Go: A late season run - late August/September.

Info From: October 2011 at 10 cms.

Other Beta: None.

Description

In the far flung reaches of southwest BC, on the interior fringe of the Coast Mountains lies a kayaking zone in an area that is better known for gold mines, one of BC's largest hydro power projects and fantastic backcountry skiing. For any kayaker visiting the Bralorne area, just one trip along the road from this town down to Gold Bridge will provide an unforgettable glimpse of the clear water and raging rapids of the Hurley River as it cuts through an immense canyon above its confluence with the Bridge River. The Hurley River through this canyon is a memorable class V paddle with a very different feel than most Coast Mountain rivers. You'll find good (but not classic) whitewater with reasonable scouting and portaging options, a very deep canyon with fantastic scenery and plenty of remains from old gold mines. If you have the time to make it all the way out here, it's worth the trip.

There is a convenient online gauge for the Hurley, located a few kilometers above the put in. 10 cms gave a medium-low/medium level. You could probably drop down to 8 cms without it being too low, and I would confidently put on at 14-15 cms. Keep in mind, however, that this level beta is from only one visit to this river, so these are just guesses as to what will remain a good flow. Use your own judgment.

The Hurley is a long way from anywhere. Bralorne, the small mining town near the put in has a pub, a place to get gas and a motel - but that's about it. The quickest way to get there from the Sea to Sky corridor is to drive over the Hurley FSR north of Pemberton, which goes over the relatively high elevation Hurley Pass, precluding easy access to this run in the spring because of snow (2 hours driving Pemberton to Bralorne). There are longer routes to Bralorne through D'Arcy or Lillooet.

The take out is in the town of Gold Bridge about 10 km downstream from Bralorne at the confluence of the Hurley and the Bridge. There are several put in options. If you don't mind mank, or if the water is on the higher side, you can start right in Bralorne on the Cadwallader River, a small tributary of the Hurley. Another option that avoids the Cadwallader is to park on the back side of the tailings pond just outside of town where you can follow an old road down to the confluence of the Hurley and Cadwallader. Finally, you can start several kilometers upstream from the tailings pond at the first point the road is close to the river.

There are several waterfalls between the upper put in and the Cadwallader that we didn't run or look at that are reported to be stout. From what you can see of the Cadwallader, it looks like continuous low volume class IV. Starting at the confluence of the Hurley and Cadwallader immediately drops you in to some good class IV-IV+ whitewater. The Hurley continues with a lot of nice boogie, peppered with 5 or 6 sections of class V - all of the difficult whitewater is recognizable from above, and anything you would want to walk has a relatively easy portage option given the size of the canyon. The whitewater comes to a close shortly after the section with distinctive orange cliffs on river left. The Hurley ends at a road bridge just downstream of the confluence where the green water of the Hurley is consumed by the silty, high volume Bridge River. Enjoy this zone - it's pretty cool.

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