

# Kokish River

## Vitals

Locale: Port McNeill, British Columbia

What It's Like: One of the greatest class V runs on the Island. A lengthy river full of complex boulder rapids in a lush canyon. Unfortunately it is dewatered for an IPP.

Class: V at medium levels.

Scouting/Portaging: Easy to strenuous river level portaging.

Level: Online gauge at <http://www.kokishriver.com>

Time: 3-8 hours.

When To Go: Runs unpredictably after heavy rain. 4 possible days of releases per year.

Info From: May 2013.

Other Beta: None.

## Description

The Kokish River of northern Vancouver Island is far off the beaten track for most kayaking parties. This is truly unfortunate - the Kokish is one of, if not the best class V run found on the Island, and sadly it was dewatered in 2014 because of the construction of an IPP. This river is a lengthy paddle that builds slowly into a long barrage of big, clean boulder rapids that will challenge everyone and leave you in awe not only because of the quality of the whitewater but also the lush rainforest canyon. It's well worth the long drive and will definitely not disappoint.

Determining flows on the Kokish is done using an online gauge (<http://www.kokishriver.com/>) provided by the company that runs the IPP on this river. It is currently unclear what the gauge numbers mean, but the previous range was about 15-25 cms, with the mid-range sweet spot around 20-22 cms. It appears as if the gauge estimates total river flow and does not measure the actual observed flow in the diverted reach. Thankfully there are 4 days of releases per year - see the Kokish River Hydro page for more information.

The Kokish is on the northern tip of Vancouver Island, near the town of Port McNeill. Being generous, it is about 5 hours north of Nanaimo. To reach the actual river, you'll need to drive north on highway 19. After passing Nimpkish Lake, you will come to an obvious sign indicating a turn to Telegraph Cove. Follow this road. If you reach Port McNeill on the 19 you've gone too far. Follow the road to Telegraph Cove and you will eventually cross the Kokish. This is the take out; you won't miss the massive powerhouse there. Follow the West Kokish logging road south to Ida Lake and put in at the bridge over the river just below the lake, or at the dam just downstream. There is excellent camping on the lake.

Out of the lake, there is a short stretch of moving water before you'll reach the intake structure. You have to portage the intake structure. Immediately below the project is a gnarly 2-tiered slot-to-massive-hole combo drop. Scout carefully and/or portage on the right. Below here things are mellow for a while, then it starts to build through nice read and run class III and class IV. About half way through the run the difficult whitewater begins. The first big class V rapid is obvious from above - it is a long multi-move boulder drop that ends in a narrow bedrock canyon. From this rapid until you just about reach the take out bridge are a stacked series of complicated, clean class IV to V boulder rapids. You can scout everything, and most things can be portaged with varying levels of difficulty. It is awesome - just keep an eye out for wood!

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