

Ashlu Creek – Mine Run

Vitals

Locale: Squamish, British Columbia

What It's Like: An under-rated classic - bedrock rapids, many big holes.

Class: IV-V at medium levels.

Scouting/Portaging: All scoutable. Tough river level portaging possible in most spots. One or two must-run rapids.

Level: Online gauge: <http://www.innergex.com/KayakFlowRelease/Ashlu> Useful for gauging when the section is high.

Time: 2-4 hours.

When To Go: July through early September.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The Mine Run on the Ashlu is one of the sleeper classics in the Squamish zone. While it lacks the huge vertical walls of the Box Canyon downstream it has just as many clean bedrock rapids, and the meat of the run has been left unaffected by the completion of the Ashlu hydro project. The Mine has a well deserved, ferocious reputation - it is an excellent section of class IV-V kayaking studded with big holes you have to punch and a stout portage or two. This run fits the BC whitewater stereotype perfectly.

The typical Mine Run season is in July and August. Be wary dropping in here early in the summer - while the Mine Run tolerates high water quite well, it does get too high. At boatable high levels it is an all out class V bar fight and it can be a real handful if you're unfamiliar with it. High levels can be gauged using the Innergex gauge for flows in the river downstream of the dam. 5-10 cms on that gauge (10 over the dam + the 30 they divert for a total of 40 in the Mine) is medium/medium high. 20 cms (50 total) on that gauge is high water. If the Innergex gauge is just showing the fish flow (~2.5 cms) the Mine will be at a medium level or lower. The Ashlu can also be loosely correlated to the Elaho - if the Elaho gauge is below 100 cms the Mine Run is probably low.

Mine Run access is via rough dirt roads that are slightly overgrown. You'll need clearance but you don't need 4x4. Drive up the Ashlu and set your take out vehicle at the dam. On rare occasions it's still possible to continue on downstream through the Box Canyon (release days, high water days). You can get to the top on either side of the river. River left access puts you in the river above the entirety of the Mine rapid. Drive about 3.8 km past the dam and park at a decent pull out between the road and river. The trail to the river is just up from here and is usually well marked with flagging tape. The river right access puts you in below the worst part of the Mine rapid. Drive the river right road until it ends at an old mining camp. To get to the river walk over the small creek and follow the old road trending right down to the old mine - at the mine shaft drop straight down to the water. Both options are about the same with respect to time - 99.9 % of the time you'll walk the Mine rapid but you will miss 2 or 3 good ones above if you choose the river right access.

From the upper (river left) put in the river is wide class II. Some good ledges lead quickly to the Mine rapid. This is a real class V+ rapid - it changed for the worse in recent years. Portage on the left around the crux move/enormous hole and put back in to a small eddy. You can't carry the bottom of the rapid, so head over to river right to scout the bottom half. The river right eddy below the portage is the lower (river right) access point. Whatever side you decide to enter by this rapid presents a stout entrance to this section of river.

Below here the river is largely pool-drop bedrock ledges with some sections of boogie. Scout as necessary. After 5 or 6 big rapids a creek will enter on river right at a point where the river bends left. Walk 50 meters up the creek and follow the flagging tape and a faint but improving trail around a terrible pinch rapid - there are ropes in place to help lower back to the river - expect 15 minutes to complete this portage. There is a shorter portage by catching a marginal eddy further down from the creek - I don't recommend this option.

After you get in there are more great rapids down to the old Mini-Mine put in, and all too quickly you'll be in the pond above the dam. Despite the hard work this is an excellent section of river - enjoy it and spread the word.

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