

Tatlow Creek

Vitals

Locale: Ashlu Valley, British Columbia

What It's Like: One of the best class V runs in SW BC. Waterfalls, slides, electric blue water and difficult access.

Class: V, all levels.

Scouting/Portaging: Difficult to virtually impossible. One common portage requires ropes to lower boats and down climb.

Level: Visual at take out. Possible correlation to the Ashlu online gauge
<http://www.innergex.com/KayakFlowRelease/Ashlu/>

Time: 4-6 hours.

When To Go: Late season run, usually in August.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

You don't need to look hard to find stories and photos of Tatlow Creek - for good reason. Despite deteriorating access roads, Tatlow Creek remains one of the most sought after class V river trips in the area for its ultra classic waterfalls and slides, electric blue water and dramatic mountain scenery. On top of the truly outstanding rapids, Tatlow Creek is a full day of adventure with a 4x4 approach, a big bushwhack to the river and usually some tricky portaging.

Tatlow is a late snowmelt run, usually in the month of August. However, good flows can sometimes happen in July when the snowpack is weak and well in to September in heavy snow years. There is no online gauge; levels are visual only and we have no good correlation to other gauges. A good visual gauge is the rock in the middle of the river immediately above the final 1 foot drop into the take out pool. If this rock is dry the river is low. If this rock has an inch or two of water spilling over the top it is medium. If this rock is making a hole, tread carefully as the water is high.

Tatlow is a tributary of the Ashlu. To get there drive up the Ashlu valley. Pass over the bridge (Box Canyon put in) and drive upstream. The road is in good condition until you pass the dam on the Ashlu. Just over 10 km past the dam there will be a spur road breaking off to the left which leads to a bad washout and a rotting bridge over the Ashlu. As of 2011 the road past the dam is partially overgrown with some very rough spots - 4x4/clearance and a vehicle you don't mind scratching up are recommended. While it used to be possible to drive to both the put in and take out, the washout just before the bridge over the Ashlu wasn't passible in September 2011.

After crossing the Ashlu the old road forks. Taking the left fork brings you to the take out pool where you can check the level. The right fork is an old grown over logging road that you hike up to reach the put in. The hike is pretty much straight up hill the whole way. Without a guide the pseudo-trail to the put in can be hard to find. Start bushwhacking down to the river when the heavily overgrown road opens up to give you an expansive view of the valley. The most important landmark to reach the good put in is a small creek that drops into Tatlow on the far side of the valley - where this creek joins Tatlow is the exact location of the best put in.

The action starts quickly from the put in with some boogie leading into the first waterfall series. Pool drop bedrock waterfalls and rapids continue for a short distance. Following the twisty bedrock rapid is some solid boogie above a common portage. Watch carefully for a bend to the left with a horizon line and a small river right eddy. This rapid (sometimes runnable) is usually portaged on river right - the path is obvious but you will need a 70 foot throwbag/rope to lower boats and climb down on.

Below the portage is the crux section of the river with several stacked big rapids that are difficult to scout. The order goes Wall Drug/pillow boof/40 foot slide with a stout entrance/log waterfall. Portaging in this section is extremely difficult. The ability to get out to scout or portage (throw-n-go) the log drop is one of the high water limiting factors on this run. After the log waterfall the intensity backs off but the run remains challenging right until the spectacular take out pool. Having

successfully descended Tatlow Creek, enjoy one of the best take outs you'll find anywhere and be fired up to chill out in such a wild place!

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