

Northwest River

Vitals

Locale: Terra Nova National Park, Newfoundland

What It's Like: Classic pool-drop bedrock rapids with dark water running through a typical Newfoundland open valley.

Class: III-IV+ (V)

Scouting/Portaging: Easy.

Level: Online gauge: http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/wrmd/ADRS/v6/Template_Station.asp?station=02YS006

Time: 2-4 hours.

When To Go: Spring snowmelt or after rain.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The Northwest River is classic Newfoundland whitewater - perhaps *the* classic whitewater run in Newfoundland. It has easy access, it's close to the major population center in the province, and most importantly the whitewater is top quality. A pool-drop character, a wide variety of rapids and runability at all kinds of water levels make this a river for both intermediate and advanced boaters alike - there's whitewater in there that will fire up just about anyone, and everything can be easily scouted and portaged.

Dark, tannin stained water, rugged bedrock and gnarled forest are the trademarks of the Northwest. Located on the eastern edge of Terra Nova National Park near the Twin Rivers golf course, the river runs through a pretty valley with many open rapids, some small canyons and many ledges with great boofs. Getting to the river is simple - the take out is where the river passes under highway 1 just inside the eastern gate of the National Park. There's a parking lot on the upstream west side of the bridge - on the river there is an obvious trail up from the water to this parking lot. To reach the put in, head back east over the river where after about 1 km there will be a dirt road turning north leading to a Scout camp. Follow this road. If you cross Salmon Brook on the highway you've gone too far. Follow this road for 7 or 8 km to an obvious fork - the right fork is gated, and the put in bridge is just past the gate. There is ample parking at the fork in the road.

One of the great things about this run is the huge range of level at which it can be run. Typical medium flows are between 15-30 cms. Lower level descents are common, with the river getting rocky and pretty chilled out. While many lines stay the same as levels rise above 30 cms, some of the bigger rapids get more difficult with expanding holes and juicier lines. An upper level will depend on your tolerance for high water. It's been run over 100 cms a few times and it's reported to be good to go.

From the put in bridge, the Northwest seems tranquil with several class II rapids off in the distance. This warm-up doesn't last long - the first rapid called Wake-Up Call is just around the corner. Pool-drop rapids continue for several kilometers. The first 'canyon' starts at a large horizon line after a long pool. This double drop is followed by a left-to-right sluice and then a long rapid that ends at The Weir. The Weir, and its lead up rapid, are worth scouting as the hole can be dangerous.

After passing under an old rail bridge is a waterfall called Feelin' Lucky? It's been ran a few times, but a thin line and hefty consequence keep most people on shore for this one. On river right there is a sneak channel, or the portage route. The second canyon is below the waterfall, with 4 or 5 rapids.

The grand finale of the Northwest comes when you reach the golf course. There are three big rapids below the foot bridge, a long pool and a small falls called 50/50 that marks the end of your day. At this unique rapid, the whole river pours out of the last pool as a giant slab of black water into a huge explosion at the bottom. Boof away and head for the cars!

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