

Branch River

Vitals

Locale: North Hudson, New York

What It's Like: Short section of boogie whitewater with a couple of distinct rapids.

Class: IV-IV+ at medium levels.

Scouting/Portaging: Easy.

Level: Visual - any time the Ausable (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?04275500>) has jumped to 4-5 feet it should be ok.

Time: 1 hour.

When To Go: Spring snowmelt, or after rain.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The Branch is one of the bigger streams in the High Peaks area of Adirondack Park in New York. It is a fun run with some quality rapids and nice clear water. Even though things flash very quickly in this area, the Branch seems to rise slower and hold water longer, which means if things are low the Branch will still have water, and if things are rocking you can fire off the Branch at big levels if it has already come up.

If approaching the Branch from Lake Placid/Keene Valley, take the 73 south (or east, we're not sure how the road is labeled) away from Lake Placid. When you get to the junction with the 9, continue south until you reach the small town of North Hudson. Take route 84 and cross under I87. If you're not coming from Keene Valley, it may be easiest to orient yourself off of I87, exiting at North Hudson/route 84. Shortly after crossing under the highway on 84 heading west you'll pass a small pond on the left side of the road - this pond is the takeout. Continuing up the road for a few minutes you'll observe a big rapid next to the road on the left, which is the start. It's possible to keep going and start at a road bridge up above, but there have been access issues at this bridge, and there is only one more rapid up there.

There is no gauge on this run. If the Ausable has gone over 4-5 feet in the last 12-24 hours the Branch should be good to go. Visually inspect the first big roadside rapid and decide if the river is runnable - the rest of the rapids are similar, if a little smaller. The river is doable at a wide range of levels and may not be for everyone at maxed out flows.

From the parking on the side of the road at the put-in, it's easy to walk up a trail to start right at the top of the first rapid, called Blue Ridge Falls. This is a long drop with a variety of lines. Below here is 100 m of class III before you pass under a bridge and get into some class I-II stuff. Things start to pick up after a bit, and you get into a really fun class III-IV section of continuous water. There is one more big rapid near the end, just before the river dumps into the pond at the take out. While this section is quite short, it is surprisingly fun and the road along the side of the river makes it easy to run multiple laps, especially if you have a shuttle driver.

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