

Squamish River - Upper

Vitals

Locale: Squamish Valley, British Columbia

What It's Like: Amazing canyons - unless you're brave, it's an early or late season scenery trip.

Class: III-IV boating in a major class V canyon.

Scouting/Portaging: Moderate. Impossible once in the canyons.

Level: Online gauge: use the Squamish: http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/graph/graph_e.html?stn=08GA022 or the Elaho: http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/graph/graph_e.html?stn=08GA071

Time: 3-4 hours.

When To Go: Very early or late season at low water. Anything but low flows haven't been tested.

Info From: Several visits.

Other Beta: There is a short trip report at TRL: <http://therangelife.blogspot.com/2007/07/trl-out.html>

Description

The Upper Squamish is all about canyons - big and incredibly scenic canyons. You get the same sort of canyons as found on Dipper Creek without having to run any big waterfalls. Truth be told the Upper Squamish is of little interest as a good kayaking run because of difficult access to paddle class III-IV or unrunnable whitewater. Despite this, it is worth doing once just to pass through the gorges. Do it at low water - it will quickly fill up and get very scary with any amount of water and to the best of our knowledge it hasn't been run at anything but low water in the shoulder seasons.

Access is along the Squamish main logging road. Head out of Squamish and up the Squamish Valley Road - pass the Ashlu and keep going. It's a bumpy ride that takes almost an hour. At the Elaho/Squamish confluence take the main river left road up the Squamish. At the first major spur head down to your left to a bridge over the river - the put in. There are several take out options. The easiest would be to paddle all the way down to where the road is right next to the river. If you don't make it all the way just bail and hike up to the road.

Flows on the Upper Squamish should be appropriate when everything is low. It might be possible with a little bit of water but it's almost certain to be unrunnable when there is any semblance of summer flow in the river. There should be a loose correlation with the Elaho gauge - 30 cms equated to a low flow. If you do run this at higher levels scout *everything* before dropping in. You can boat to the brink in a few places that might require backtracking up the canyon to portage - this would be impossible at high water.

Bushwhack down the river left gully at the bridge. You'll boat some wide open stuff and shortly come to the first canyon - the entrance is unrunnable. The second canyon has some seductive entrance drops and you'll be tempted to boat on in. Be careful - just downstream is a 15 foot drop caused by old growth logs wedged in the canyon. It's runnable but very dicey and you can't see what's downstream from river level. Backtrack if you have to, or scout the whole thing beforehand.

The third canyon is below Dipper Creek (take a look at that confluence waterfall!) where the volume doubles. It is good to go - wicked scenery but be careful for wood. Shortly below here is the fourth canyon - it has a portage - it's an easy 10-15 minute walk out to the road if you don't want to do this portage.

The Upper Squamish is fully worth the trip, but maybe just once. Continue on down through the last canyon(s) if you like, or go explore what lies upstream. Also if you're in the area running Dipper I'd recommend running the third canyon on the Upper Squamish to hike out - it's a much easier walk than the other options.

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