

Raquette River – Stone Valley

Vitals

Locale: Colton, New York

What It's Like: Steep New York pool drop. One of the harder sections in the area. Dam release provides reliable flow.

Class: IV-V

Scouting/Portaging: Easy.

Level: Online gauge found here: <http://www.h2online.com/365125.asp> Provided by the dam operators. Not always accurate.

Time: 2-3 hours.

When To Go: Scheduled releases in July-September. Runs outside of scheduled releases regularly in the spring.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

Description

The Raquette River is a great summer standby river for people living in eastern Ontario and northern New York. Aside from 6 scheduled releases from mid-summer through early fall, it runs regularly throughout the whole season, which a lot of people don't seem to take advantage of - there is even a flow estimate page which the power company at the put-in updates almost daily so you don't have to guess about flows. It's classic New York boating.

The release level for the Raquette is 720 cfs, which is a good but rocky level for the river. It's obvious that the river, before being dammed, flowed at volumes much greater than 720 cfs. A good low water cutoff is 500 cfs. The once-a-year 900 cfs release is the best level to pad out all the rapids and keep the holes from getting too large. 1200cfs is a good upper level when you can still reasonably run everything.

Getting to the Raquette is really easy once you get to Colton in northern New York. In town there is one bridge over the river - cross to river right (you'll be able to see the dam from the bridge) and drive downstream past the fire hall whereupon you'll come to a dirt parking lot. Park here and put in directly below the dam. To reach the takeout, go back over the bridge and once on the main road turn right. About 5 km down take a right on Browns Bridge Road, which will bring you back over the river - immediately turn right again. About 500 m upstream you will reach a small pull off with a sand pit on the left and the river next to the road on the right - this is the takeout. There is a trail that follows the river on river right, and a half way takeout if you want to finish early.

A day on the Raquette begins by walking from the parking area down to the base of the dam - at most levels all of the water will be coming from the bottom release gate, but if it's really high the dam may be spilling water - on those days you probably don't want to paddle here. There is an eddy right next to where the water is flying out from the dam to start in. Some class IV slides bring you down to the first huge horizon line - Colton Falls.

Colton Falls is a big rapid but it can be broken down into easy pieces. There are a lot of lines to choose from, especially if you come at higher flows. Be careful of getting too far left at the middle boof - the slot is not good. The far river right entrance - with a pocket called the Chapel (because you'll be on your knees praying if you go in there) is also a problem.

Below Colton Falls the action eases slightly with a series of fun ledge rapids that are easy to scout or portage. The Narrows is the next point of concern - this is the rapid you'll likely run high on the right. It swiftly flows into the second big rapid called The Tub so if something goes wrong save your friends (or yourself) quickly. The bold can scout The Tub from the middle island - otherwise scout river left.

Particle Accelerator is next - scope it from the island in the middle of the river. This drop is trickier than it looks. The falls in the left channel is shallow but good to go. The last rapid - named 200 Proof - is just around the corner after which you'll paddle a few km of class II down to the take out. Be careful of the poison ivy and load up for another lap!

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