

## Riviere Rouge – 7 Sister Waterfalls

### Vitals

Locale: Calumet, Quebec

What It's Like: A mid/late summer 'waterfall' run. Big ledges with stout holes.

Class: IV-IV+

Scouting/Portaging: Easy.

Level: Under 50 cms on the Rouge gauge (<http://www.cehq.gouv.qc.ca/Suivihydro/graphique.asp?NoStation=040204>) with 20-30 being the most common.

Time: 2-3 hours.

When To Go: Mid summer through fall, when the river is low.

Info From: Many runs between 20 and 45 cms. Guide written in September 2009.

Other Beta: None.

### Description

*Contributed by Philip Kompass.*

The Rouge River is a Quebec mainstay, and it is commonly run by all manner of river craft. It is a big-volume tributary of the Ottawa River flowing out of the Laurentians about one hour east of Ottawa. While the Rouge has a number of paddleable sections, the Seven Sisters is the most popular, and infamous. The upper section of the 7 Sisters is best at high flows that render the Sisters waterfalls unrunnable. This beta is for the waterfalls - they typically run at times of low flow late in the summer.

Don't bother with this section of river at low flows unless you intend to run the Sisters. Aside from the gorge and falls, the remainder of the rapids are class II-III knuckle dragging. It is still nice scenery and good photo opportunities abound if that's your bag, but don't expect good whitewater aside from the main drops.

To reach the Rouge, head east from Ottawa along Hwy 50 until it forces you on the Hwy 148. (Highway 50 is under construction, and will eventually cross the Rouge en route to Mirabel/ Montreal.) Once you cross the Rouge River, there is a small campground on the east side of the highway. This is the take out. Depending on the season there may be a small charge to park there.

Head to the put-in by continuing east along Hwy 148 for one kilometer, and turn left onto Ch. De la Riviere Rouge. Remain on Ch. de la Riviere Rouge - when in doubt keep left at the forks in the road until it reaches the river. Parking is an issue here. The rafting companies offer parking for a small fee.

Number 1: After some scrapey class II you will come to the first Sister called Elizabeth's Ledge. At low flow (when you'll be here for the falls) it is a nice boogey Class III. This one is run at high flows as well, with a boily recirculating mess at the bottom.

Continue downstream through a mix of class II and III until reaching an obvious gorge. The sound of the falls will indicate the start of the canyon and Sisters 2-7. There is also a cleared trail on the right to portage this section if you are running at higher water.

This canyon section is deserving of some respect. The holes are powerful and have delivered some brutal beatdowns through the years. That said, the lines are straightforward, there is ample opportunity to set good safety, plan and scout. Get your boof on. (Editor's note: People will argue this is class V whitewater - I fully disagree - unless you're running the falls at the high end at 40 or 50 cms this is a very forgiving spot - the pools are huge, the lines are wide and even though the holes can be sticky it is probably *the* easiest river around to set up great safety - go try it out.)

Number 2: Easy boof off the obvious flake. You can eddy out if you like or just roll into the next drop. They are separated only by a short moving pool.

Number 3: Different levels bring different lines. This one is a rolling 10 footer, typically run on the right edge trying to clear the pocket hole. A good ledge for safety is just below the hole, river left.

Number 4: Two line choices. Boof left or plug right. This one is pretty simple and heaps of fun but a little more difficult to set safety.

Number 5 & 6: This one-two punch has the highest pucker factor and likely gives out the most beatdowns. Number 5 is a steep and bouncy ledge through a powerful hole. The current then bends around a corner, working to pull you off line. Number 6 lies about 50 feet downstream and is a uniform ledge hole with a rounded lip. The drop is probably 6 feet in height, with a slight weakness on the river left side. Get your bow up and keep stroking hard as there is a significant tow-back.

If you want to run a second lap, take out just downstream on the river right side and walk the cleared cart path to the top.

Number 7: About 100 yards downstream lies Number 7. Typically run on the river right, it is a bouncy slide with a rooster tail to launch off of. It can be shallow in the run out so keep your head dry.

Paddle a short stretch of class II and III until reaching Hwy 148. Look for a trail and head up to your car. Enjoy.

Note: This entire section is known as the Seven Sisters, even though most people don't run the falls that often. Although the river often floods over 500 cms in spring, it will run for a large part of the spring and summer at a much more reasonable flow. With levels of 75 - 200 cms this run becomes prime for playboaters offering a good variety of surf spots and wicked fun big-water rapids. Check it out sometime as an alternate choice to the flatwater of the Gatineau or the line-ups of the Ottawa.

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