

Whitewater information options near the cabin

For those who seek river excitement the Potomac Highlands offer a number of great rivers for day use and several long sections that can be run as multi-day experiences for personal trips. The level of difficulty varies from class 1 to class 6 (un-runnable). The US Army Corp maintains a website that allows recreational users to track water levels from their computer and this is very useful for planning trips. Many commercially published river guidebooks will suggest the recommended water levels based on this website.

Here is the link http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wv/nwis/current/?type=flow&group_key=basin_cd

Most all of these rivers, with few exceptions, are natural flow which means that they do not have a constant river level as a river that is controlled by a dam. This means that there is a best season to run many of these sections and WV enjoys the most rainfall November through July. When the natural rivers are not running it is time to turn to those that have artificial flow (from a dam). The short list of guided favorites that have year round flow include; The Yough, The New, The Gauley, and now the adventure park at the Wisp resort.

All of the rivers in WV run out of steep mountains as they make their way to the sea and thus they are what we call “pool/drop”. Rather than a continuous roller coaster of water, they have steep sections and flat pools between them. This is great - because it allows you a spot to pick up the pieces! The more continuous a river, the more difficult it is to navigate generally – this concept is reinforced by the rivers gradient or how many feet per mile the river drops. In these examples you can get a sense of the experience using this data.

One option on natural flow is the Cheat River and this very long watershed will often have enough water, even in the dry season for some trips. The Cheat has two whitewater sections that are pool/drop and sustain a gradient of 20’/mile for 5 miles of the narrows at class 2-4 and the Canyon which falls 25’/mile for 11 miles of class 3-5 whitewater.

Blackwater Outdoor Center has permits to run several commercial sections of the Cheat and is just over an hour’s drive from the cabin. They may be able to outfit a trip for you. Their website with rates is included here.

<http://www.blackwateroutdoors.com/rafting.html>

The New River is referred to as “The Grand Canyon of the East” and offers a number of sections; several can be combined for a multi-day experience. The New is big water, pool/drop and averages 20 feet/mile in the canyon.

The Upper New is class 1-3 whitewater and has a minimum age of 6 and can be run in inflatable kayaks or “duckies” for ages 6-10 depending on the water level.

The Lower New is class 2-5 whitewater and has a minimum age of 11 years old.

These sections offer great whitewater and are 2.5 hours from the cabin. North American River Runners works with Ace Adventure Center to outfit trips and you can look at rates packages here:

<http://www.narr.com/white-water-rafting-packages.html>

They also offer a Kayak School which takes students with no experience and teaches them to navigate moving water or with additional lessons, to run whitewater. Minimum age is 12 years old and lessons begin on a lake.

The Gauley is “the people’s choice river”, rated as one of the five most challenging commercial sections run in North America and it draws visitors from all over the world each year in September and October during the drawdown of Summersville Lake. This river offers two great sections and while experience is recommended for the Lower Gauley, it is required for the Upper Gauley.

The Upper Gauley is pool/drop and offers 16 miles of class 4 and 5 whitewater dropping 28’/mile. Minimum age is 15 years old - prior experience mandatory.

The Lower Gauley is pool/drop and offers 8 more miles of class 3-4 whitewater dropping 26’/mile. Minimum age is 12 years old. Prior experience highly recommended.

The Gauley River is 2.25 hours from the cabin and Class VI River Runners offers trips at this link:

http://www.classvi.com/site/white_water_rafting/fall_gauley_river_rafting/fall_gauley_calendar.html

The Wisp at Deep Creek Maryland offers a whitewater park which operates on a mountaintop May through October and offers a constant flow, river loop where participants can have two hours of rafting time on a class 1-4 river section, just like a roller coaster or the Olympic Water Park in Sydney Australia. Your fee covers 2 hours in the WW Park – including your safety orientation, and all equipment is provided on site. To learn more visit

<http://www.adventuresportscenter.com/>

Rates are not inexpensive related to the cost of running a park and the complex machinery to create an artificial river. But you do get continuous excitement and the chance to have a hot shower afterward and sleep in a bed of your choosing. This Whitewater Park is 1.5 hours from the cabin. Rates are here

http://www.adventuresportscenter.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=3

One of the few extremely steep creeks that is run commercially in the Eastern United States in the Upper Youghiogheny or “Yough” (pronounced yock) which is 1.75 hours from the cabin.

This river offers 10.5 miles of nearly continuous class 5 whitewater and the river drops over 116’/mile. Running the Yough requires a continuous and sustained athletic effort from all four passengers while the raft appears to fall down a series of waterfalls and cascades. This section requires prior experience and swimming ability. The season is controlled by dam release and Upper Yough Expeditions is a great outfitter service & posts rates and schedules for trips.

<http://www.upperyoughexpeditions.com/>

And finally, right outside the door of the cabin is the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River. There are no outfitters that run this section, but if you have your own whitewater boats (whitewater canoes, river kayaks, rafts) or inner tubes, it can provide a fun ride of class 1-3 when it is running. The best time to catch it is in the Spring and Fall, but even in summer there will be a brief rise to runnable levels after a rain event. The gauge to look for is The Shavers Fork Below Bowden to be above 4.7 feet (for inner tubing it can be a bit lower):

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wv/nwis/uv/?site_no=03068800&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060,62614

You can park at the bridge next to the Cheat River Inn and run a 4 mile section to the house in 2-4 hrs.