

The Grande Cache Wild River Rendezvous

Always the 1st weekend in June.
Call Wild Blue Yonder Rafting Tours for water conditions
Put these dates on your calendar.
June 5th, 6th, 7th, - 2009

By Dale Tuck

Grande Cache is located 140km north of Hinton, Alberta, on the BigHorn highway 40. Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky mountains Grande Cache has, arguably, some of the best paddling in Alberta, not to mention Western Canada. The Grande Cache area has 4 major rivers to paddle: (in order of difficulty - easiest to hardest) the Smoky River, Sulphur River, Muskeg River, and Sheep Creek. Paddling season is from approximately early May to Mid-August but varies widely depending on rainfall and snowmelt. Peak flood usually occurs in the first week of June, and can raise the rivers to monstrous proportions. The information provided below is a guide to get you familiar with our rivers; however, under no circumstances should you act upon this information without consulting a local guide. We assume no liability for the accuracy of the information presented. Grande Cache rivers are strewn with strainers, sharp rocks, keeper holes, and unpaddleable waterfalls, do not paddle our rivers without having competent skills and a few runs under your belt with local paddlers. In addition to the river dangers the put-in's and take-out's can also be quite demanding. Highway access at some locations is not developed and therefore dangerous (be very careful when merging and exiting the highway at unexpected locations). To help facilitate familiarization with our rivers and provide an incredible opportunity for socializing local Grande Cache paddlers put on the Grande Cache Wild River Rendezvous. On this weekend the club hosts out-of-town paddlers to the local paddling menu by day and social events by night -fun, fun, fun, so don't miss it!

The following information includes details on the Rendezvous and river descriptions.

The complete Paddling experience for \$4

The only cost for the Rendezvous is \$4 for insurance payable to the AWA. **All paddlers must sign in at the front desk of the Grande Cache Hotel, fill out (name & address, including email address) and sign the AWA waiver and pay the \$4 insurance fee.** All people attending may be required to participate in shuttling boats or helping out with other tasks associated with paddling. The Saturday night pasta Buffet is not free but social activities and shuttling are partially sponsored by the Canadian Institute of Extreme Racing and the Grande Cache Hotel.

Paddling Schedule

Friday, (always the first weekend in June see dates above)

Muskeg River (6pm-10pm) - meet outside Grande Cache Hotel (alternatively meet us directly at the Muskeg River Put-in at about 7:00pm)

Saturday:

Choose one of the following options:

-Muskeg River (10am-12pm), followed by Sulphur River & Smoky River (2pm-6pm),

or

-Sheep Creek (all day, 10am-6pm) - advance/experts only - this run is serious white water.

Sunday:

Usually on Sunday everyone paddles the Sulphur River as a large group, and this is the river that will normally be guided unless water conditions (too high or too low) dictate another option should be employed.

Paddlers may opt for paddling other rivers, although these are not guided.

- Sulphur River (11am- 3pm).

IMPORTANT:

You are responsible for giving us your boat and gear 30 minutes prior to departure. Please do not come 5 minutes prior to departure and expect to "hop on." We need your boat, paddling gear, and dry gear ready to be loaded 30 minutes prior to the above listed departure times.

This Wild River Rendezvous is a flexible weekend with canoeists, duckies and family members welcome. Non-paddlers can enjoy one of the many rafting trips with Wild Blue Yonder Tours while paddlers shred up the local waves. For more information on rafting packages contact Wild Blue Yonder Tours 1-877-wild-run (945-03786) or try their Web site: www.rafttherockies.net

Grande Cache is also perfect for a variety of other outdoor activities such as:

- *Hiking & trail running (gateway to Wilmore Wilderness Park) 100's of miles of trails
- *Mountain biking, an endless selection of trails from beginner to expert.
- *Golf, one of Alberta's most scenic 9 hole courses. Stunning views from every hole.
- *Tennis - two courts located in the center of town surrounded by mountains on all sides.
- *Swimming, at the recreation center pool, Grande Cache Lake beach, or Pierre Grey lakes.
- *Fishing & Hunting- check with fish and wildlife for the various seasons.
- *Horseback riding - there are several riding stables in the area that offer packages.
- *Quading, 4 wheeling - please stay on existing trails.
- *Grande Cache is also home of the **Canadian Death Adventure Race**. The Canadian Death Run is held every August Long weekend -125km individual or relay, cross three mountain summits, gain over 17,000ft of elevation, raft across a major river. Check us out www.canadiandeathrace.com

Rendezvous Social Events at the Grande Cache Hotel.

The Grande Cache Hotel is the host hotel and has planned a variety of events for the weekend. Paddling all day and socializing at night will ensure the Grande Cache Wild River Rendezvous will be a memorable experience. All paddlers **must meet** in the hotel Lobby **30 minutes prior to the above listed river departure times**, to arrange shuttles and organize into groups.

Friday: upon arrival

Either before or after your Friday evening paddle, pick up your registration information package at the Grande Cache Hotel front desk and socialize in the lounge at High country Steak and Ale in the Grande Cache Hotel. Meet your hosts, Dale Tuck, and Jean Bourdua.

Saturday: 8pm - 2am, post paddling buffet and Party.

Meet us in the Lounge for our White Water Buffet - all you can eat: Pasta, salads, and garlic toast (this is not free but is available to all at reasonable cost). Drink specials in the bar for paddlers all night long. As the evening progresses move to Rockies Bar and listen to the latest dance music as you swap paddling stories until closing. Don't miss your shuttle in the morning. We need your boat, paddling gear, and dry gear, 30minutes prior to departure time.

Sunday: 9am -11am, Pre-paddling Brunch.

Join us for the Grande Cache Hotel's Sunday Brunch. Shuttles leave at 11am. Give us your gear by 10:30 so we can load your stuff.

Accommodations:

- ***Grande Cache Hotel** - all paddlers will receive the sport rate, for reservations call 780-827-3377
- ***Marv-Moore Campground** - for reservations call 403-827-3362 (9am-4pm).

River descriptions:

River descriptions are for a medium high water level which is very typical in early June. If water levels are low the water features are somewhat reduced. If the river is in full flood all rivers become expert only and very dangerous filled with debris, trees and recirculating holes.

The mighty **Muskeg River** (many options for beginners to advanced. The description here is for the **main put-in**)

The main white water portion of the river is Class 2-3 with a section of class four. With its many play waves, and friendly holes this river is touted as the favorite after work river run by the local paddlers. The takeout is a laborious climb back up to the highway, with 3 steep, and progressively longer, pitches. 15 minutes to the shuttle if you are ultra fit, 30 minutes if you've been channel surfing all winter long.

Muskeg River Highlights:

- The surfing wave at the Hwy 40 bridge
- The Fraser ledge (8ft broken ledge)
- The slot - 8ft wide and pumping.
- Tumble Weed (the hole to show your stuff)
- The little muskeg falls (runnable but not for the faint of heart), 15ft seal launch for the portage.
- Note: you must know where the take-out is or **risk death going over Muskeg falls!**

The Scenic **Sulphur River & Smoky River**

Renowned for its breathtaking beauty and steep canyons the Sulphur is a class 2 River with a little class 3 towards the end, although in very high water this run turns into steady class 3 and 4 with many nasty hydraulics. The Sulphur merges with the Smoky River at the Sulphur gates. From this point on it is a relatively flat-water paddle through the scenic Smokey River valley to the take-out. The Put in is incredibly beautiful but steep.

Sulphur River Highlights

- Spectacular scenery
- Variety of play and surf waves.
- A nasty ledge and hydraulic (at high water) where several commercial rafts flipped in 1997, and where a rafter drowned in 1999. Sneak route on river right, hero route on extreme left and jump in the eddy.
- Little hells gate: the whole river comes to a 15ft strangle, very scenic, but stay left to avoid the hole on river right
- The Sulphur ends with a 250ft high sheer cliff wall on river left. The water really picks up in this last mile. Grab as many surf waves as you can and eddy up as the river gathers steam and plunges into the confluence of the Smoky River.

Smokey River Highlights

- Starting at the confluence of the Sulphur River and the spectacular hells gate, wave to the many tourist/hikers on the cliff bluffs above.
- Swirling eddy lines and whirlpools
- The eddy of death: watch for this treacherous super-depressed eddy on river right. The eddy is hidden in a cave-like rock formation jutting out from a point of land on river left.

The Sonic Sheep Creek.

Anyone who has had the pleasure of paddling this world class whitewater run has been left awe struck by its, length, steepness, and diverse water features. This is an all day true wilderness run, with steady class 3, 4 and a portage-able class 5 for those so inclined. Perils and pleasures abound with many of the same characteristics as the Fraser River, but to a slightly lesser degree. Holes (friendly and otherwise), ledges, drops, ender spots, and 10-12ft surfing waves clutter this classic adventure run! Solid (Read "advanced") paddling skill are required to attempt this river in flooded conditions. **Come prepared:** ropes, carabiners, tow harness, food, water, first aid, etc.

Sheep Creek Highlights

- The Rock Horn Rapid - steep steady class three plus-four
- Lauzon's Ledge - ever spend forever getting out of a hole? Sneak route on river right, or take the narrow green tongue about 15ft from shore on river left (at very high water there is no green tongue - stay right!).
- The Cauldron - eddy up and grab the zigzag green tongue on river right - stay on your line - nasties on either side. Sometimes this water feature is choked with trees. If so the portage is on river right.
- The Class 5 is a tricky approach - a mass of swirling eddylines and boils - undercuts are everywhere as you negotiate your way through an 8 foot strangle. After the strangle you have less than two boat lengths to move into position (either extreme river left or right) to avoid the hydraulic at the bottom of a 15ft slightly slanting waterfall- WOW!
- Hidie's ledge - massive river wide inescapable hydraulic - extreme left or right and jump in the eddy. Often there is debris in the eddies. Alternatively, there is a small green tongue about 20 to 30ft from shore on river left, its only about 4ft wide and if you miss, gulp, you are fish food. Soooo, don't miss!
- Sheep creek falls - 8ft vertical falls - stay extreme river left or right. There is a challenging hole in the middle that almost always results in a swim if you don't punch through.
- The slide - you'll know it when you see it, big green and -gulp- high (it goes up! It should actually be called the "ramp").
- 8 to 12 foot surfing waves everywhere - grab one - fun, fun, fun!
- take out at the highway bridge.

Alberta Whitewater Association
WAIVER OF LIABILITY AGREEMENT

WARNING - BY SIGNING THIS FORM YOU GIVE UP IMPORTANT LEGAL RIGHTS! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: _____
ADDRESS OF PARTICIPANT: _____
EMAIL: _____

DISCLAIMER CLAUSE

The Alberta Whitewater Association, its member clubs, instructors, directors, agents, employees, volunteers and representatives (hereafter referred to as the "Association") and Her Majesty the Queen in Rights of the Province of Alberta are not responsible for any injury, loss or damage of any kind sustained by any person while participating in the Association's programs and activities for whitewater kayaking and canoeing, including injury, loss or damage which might be caused by the negligence of the Association.

DESCRIPTION OF RISKS

I acknowledge that I am aware of the possible RISKS, DANGERS AND HAZARDS associated with the water programs and activities for kayaking and canoeing either in a pool or outdoors in lakes, rivers or sea, including THE POSSIBLE RISK OF SEVERE OR FATAL INJURY TO MYSELF OR OTHERS. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ The risk of drowning including but not limited to, resulting from equipment entanglement, falling out of kayak/canoe into the water or being knocked unconscious in the water;
- ◆ Injuries resulting from your physical body hitting the kayak, pool surface or being hit by another paddler;
- ◆ Injuries resulting from abrasion from the pool surface
- ◆ On outdoor trips, extremes of weather or temperature which may result in hypothermia
- ◆ Hazards related to travel in and on lakes, rivers or seas
- ◆ Where applicable remoteness of location with poor communications and inability to get rescue or medical assistance quickly or easily
- ◆ Unfamiliar country where the participant may become lost, get off course or be separated from the rest of the party
- ◆ Medical problems arising before, during or after the trip
- ◆ Steep terrain where a fall or rock fall may cause injury or death
- ◆ Additional risks associated with travel to and from locations including transport by public or private motor vehicle, helicopter and light fixed-wing aircraft
- ◆ Failure to follow directions from instructors or those in charge of out door trips, including those specifying
 - a) staying with the group at all times unless the instructors or those in charge are consulted and provide consent;
 - b) where required and instructed to be wearing an approved personal flotation device completely fastened at all times on and around water;
 - c) safe use of tools and other equipment where required

INDEMNIFICATION AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY

In return for the Association allowing me to voluntarily participate in its programs and activities, I agree:

1. TO ASSUME AND ACCEPT ALL RISKS arising out of, associated with or related to my participation in the Association's programs and activities, even though such risks may have been caused by the negligence of the Association;
2. TO BE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INJURY, LOSS OR DAMAGE which I may sustain while participating in the Association's programs and activities for kayaking and canoeing, even though such injury, loss or damage may have been caused by the negligence of the Association;
3. TO IDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS the Association, its officers, directors, agents, volunteers, employees and representatives from any and all claims, demands, actions and costs which might arise out of my participation in the Association's water programs and activities for kayaking and canoeing, even though such claims, demands, actions and costs may have been caused by the negligence of the Association.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A LEGAL AGREEMENT. It is binding upon myself as well as upon my heirs, next of kin, executors, administrators, assigns and representatives, in the event of my death or incapacity. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD ALL THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT, and by signing this agreement voluntarily I am agreeing to abide by these terms.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20 _____,

Signature of Participant (must be 18 or over)

Signature of Witness

Signature of Parent (if under 18)

Printed Name of Witness

Printed Name of Parent (if under 18)