

Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides Spring/99

Chilko
River

Rec Use:
Rating: Class 4+ skills)



At a Glance

The Chilko River offers the best wilderness white water kayaking in the region with extensive class 3 rapids. The Chilko is also well known for river rafting and fly fishing (near Chilko Lake).

Overall Length: ± 64 km from Chilko lake to Taseko Junction
Average Grade: Class 3 with Class 4 sections
Best Time of Year: May-October
Skill Level Required: Advanced-Expert

The outdoor recreation ratings have been developed through a combination of generally recognized standards for activities such as biking, hiking, kayaking, and local knowledge. The kayak ratings provided in this guide are based on the International Scale of River Classification (7 grades).

Getting There:

The most direct route is to travel west from Williams Lake on Highway 20 for about 130 km and turn south on the Chilko Newton Road (gravel). After crossing the Chilko river at Siwash Bridge, stop and scout the flow under the bridge. The road continues south, running more or less parallel to the Chilko River, eventually reaching the headwaters in Chilko Lake. Access points occur where the main road swings close to the river (see map reverse). The other, more long distance touring option, is to continue on Highway #20 for 220 km west to Tatla Lake and head south for 20 km, following signs to Tsyi'os Park and Chilko Lake lodge.

Be Aware of..

- ▶ Hazards associated with technical sections of river - you are strongly advised to scout the river before descending.
- ▶ Extreme hazard at Siwash Bridge - **avoid** at high flow. Essential to scout in all other flow conditions.
- ▶ All River Classes are 1 grade higher during high water.
- ▶ Snags or wood in river.
- ▶ Possibility of bear encounters at camping, take out and put in sites.

White Mile

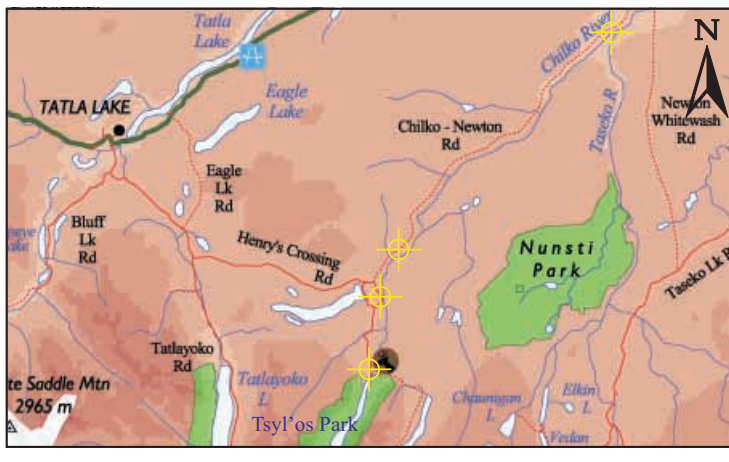


Scouting Bidwell



Regional Overview

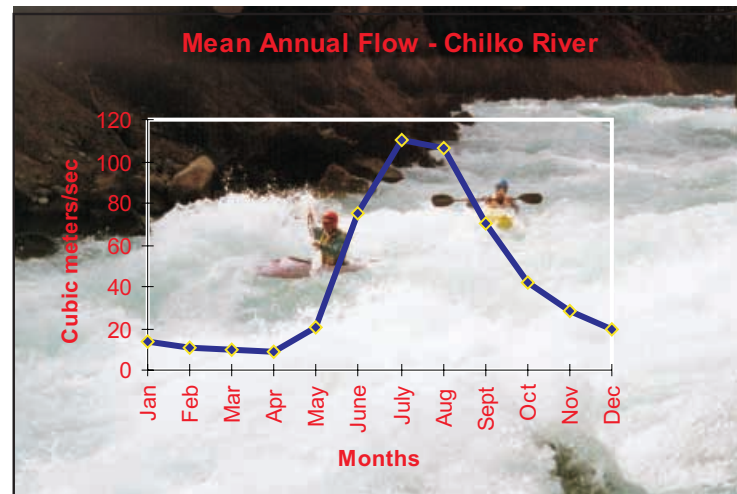
Primary River Access



River Description:

The following description begins with a put-in at Chilko Lake Lodge (beginning of the river). Check at the lodge for permission to launch or park, or find a site on Crown land, further north. The river begins as an easy Class I-II with no real rapids or hazards. You float past two major access points; Henry's Crossing and a commercial river raft campsite (look for major ramp down to river) on the left. **Canoes 'take out' here.** Up to this point the Chilko is wide, not fast, and provides beautiful views of the surrounding mountains and forests in Tsyi'os Park and beyond. Once beyond the river raft campsite, the river begins to take on more canyon features with small rapids up to Class III and some big waves at high water. Watch for wood hazards. You approach the most common kayak put-in at the 'kayak put-in' (see map) which is a steep drop to the river and the first place the river and access road meet heading up-stream. Now the fun begins! The Chilko passes through basalt formations and becomes steeper with more rocks in the drops and more holes. The surfing picks up and provides a ton of play. Once it starts to get really big, you've reached the 'infamous' Bidwell rapid. Eddy-out on river left. There is a short trail up to a vantage point giving you a view of the drop. Watch for hidden wood, usually at bottom left. After Bidwell comes more play and the legendary 'white mile' (known for a movie). This rapid is a straight forward busy Class IV with big holes and tons of play. The rapid ends with a hard right turn and then mellows through a lava canyon. The canyon's steep basalt walls will keep you in awe until the 'eagles claw.' At this point you have the option of a take-out to avoid the easier (flat) last 10 km. This spot would also be a good put-in for intermediate paddlers. At this point the only challenge is 'Maytag', an easy S-bend with a hole. After this rapid the river is flat with braided channels continuing to the Taseko River junction. The Ministry of Forests Rec site at the junction is a good place to camp.

The other run on the Chilko is from Taseko junction to Bull Canyon. The river is Class II-III+ with the most hazardous spot at Siwash Bridge (big re-circulating hydraulic). **Warning:** the river funnels into a narrow opening between the bridge piers (±4 m wide). Essential to scout. **Avoid at high water!** Generally a fun, playful kayak run with amazing beauty and lots of surf. Watch for wood at mid-stream where the Chilko joins the Chilcotin River.



Bidwell Rapid

Source: Canadian Hydrographic Survey Averages

The authors of the Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides have tried hard to provide up to date, accurate information. However, no guide is perfect and no responsibility is accepted for any discrepancies or lack of precision. Also, users of the Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides agree to waive any and all claims against the authors and staff for personal injury or misadventure while undertaking any outdoor recreation activity. Make sure you evaluate your ability in relation to the risks and challenges. Be **prepared** for weather changes, bring first aid gear, **go with a friend(s)**, and **leave a copy of your trip plan with someone you trust.**

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