

# Bow River

## Ghost Dam to Cochrane

### Why Go

This reach is paddled by those who want to play the eddies down to the Gas Plant rapid and then exit below, or those wanting to camp on Wildcat Island, or those looking for a fun and pleasant paddle through foothills scenery.

### Duration of Tour(s)

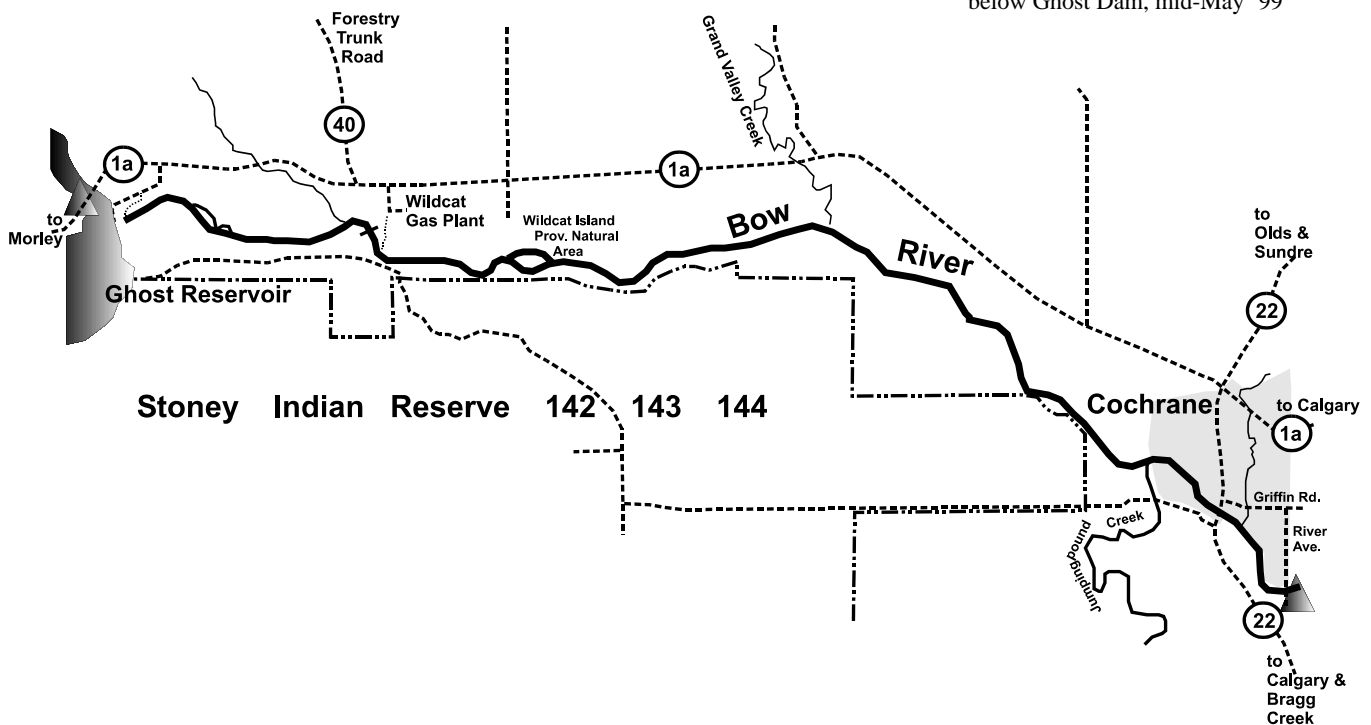
- \* 22 km
- \* ½ to 2 days

### Classification

1. Rapids: to Class II+
2. Skill of Paddlers: Intermediate River, or Novice River with good leadership



below Ghost Dam, mid-May '99



### Start

The start for this run is just below the Ghost Dam. The road down was damaged during the floods of 2005. The road is presently closed and as I update this report in August 2009, the road repairs are NOT under consideration and are not likely to occur! This means it is about a 400 m hike down to the river from the top of the bank.

### Finish

The proposed finish for this run is at the River Avenue Bridge right in Cochrane.

## Intermediate Access and Distances

Location	Elevation meters	Km down	Km up	Km between	Access / Bank or Rapid / Class	MGRS datum NAD 1983 Zone 11U	Gradient m/km
below Ghost Dam		20.1	0		left bank		
	1143	18.1	2				
Gas Plant Rapid		16.6	3.5		Class I-II, diagonal ledge	PS 636 766	
Gas Plant Rd Access		16.1	4	4	left bank, hike in/out	PS 639 762	
Wildcat Island		14.3	5.8	1.8		PS 656 763	
Railway Bridge		6.1	14			PS 727 751	
	1128	5.9	14.2				1.2
Jumpingpound Creek		3.6	16.5		right bank	PS 746 737	
Highway #22		2.2	17.9			PS 756 731	
River Avenue		0.0	20.1	14.3	left bank, just below the bridge	PS 770 721	
	1113	-1.5	21.6				2.0

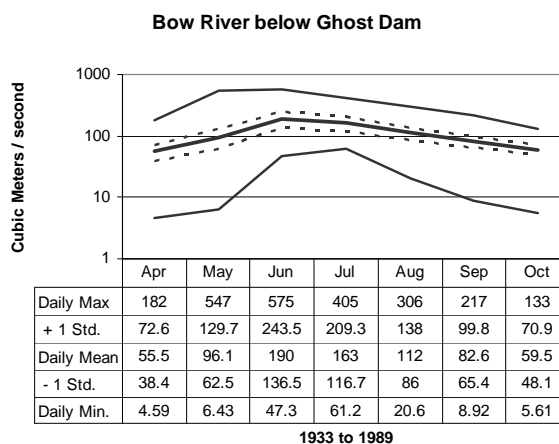
## Gradient

Average Gradient on this run varies between 1.2 m/km and 2 m/km.

## River Volume and Flow Rate

Best paddling on this reach will be had with flows of approximately 75 to 200 cms at the Calgary station. Because this reach is immediately below a major hydroelectric dam, do expect flows to fluctuate considerably, especially in the morning and evening as Calgarians power-up their homes.

As I review this report in August 2009, I find that the Cochrane station, on the Alberta Environment web site, is still not reporting on the standard graph or table, and other stations are one dam above or below this reach. To the right is the data from the old Ghost Dam station. The Calgary station does tend to report higher flows at each data point, as one might expect for a station further downstream.



## Maps

1 - First choice map for this reach would be the ARCA Alberta River Guide *The Middle Bow River: Ghost Dam to Carseland* along with one's ever present *Alberta Road Map*.

- 2 -     NTS 1:250,000                    NTS 1:50,000  
        82 O Calgary                    82 O/1 Calgary  
    82 O/2 Jumping Pound Creek

## Camping

Public campgrounds are available just off the river at both the start and finish of this run. At the start you have your choice on either side of Highway #1a on the Ghost Reservoir (403.851.0766) just above the dam, and in Cochrane at Bow Riversedge Campground (403.932.4675) just up River Avenue from the Bridge. Wilderness camping is available on Wildcat Island. Wildcat Island is a Provincial Natural Area, and does tend to get well used, so please plan on not using the local forest to fuel a camp fire; take a stove instead! If I lived in Calgary, I can certainly envision a late afternoon escape to Wildcat Island and then a pleasant early morning paddle down to Cochrane.

## Wildlife

Deer, coyotes and beaver are the most likely mammals to be spotted, along with a wide variety of bird life.

## Trip Notes

In the past, for Calgarians, this was the classic “training” run. One took their lessons with the Bow Waters or Calgary Canoe Club, or the Rocky Mountain Paddling Centre and after a river and eddy turn intro’ at the “Bowness eddies” one’s first canoe trip was likely to be this reach. White water paddlers most often just paddle the first 4 km as this part of the run does have the best selection and concentration of eddies and river features for practice. But the whole run is very scenic as the river begins the transition from the foothills to the prairies.

The most significant rapid is the Gas Plant rapid. This rapid is a partial diagonal ledge extending out from the left bank.

## Other Reaches

Upstream of this reach is the 12 km long Ghost Reservoir, a body of water best left to the sailing “set,” though I must admit that the reservoir did make a good site for a sea kayak instructors course I once took. The run below through Calgary is next in this guide.

## Other Local Activities or Destinations

On a cold, ugly day, or if Trans Alta “turns the river off” – there is much to do in the Cochrane and Calgary region. I would suggest checking out the Historic Cochrane Ranch in Cochrane, or taking in the Calgary Zoo (one of the world’s best), or I’m most likely to head to the Glenbow Museum in downtown Calgary.

## Rentals and Shuttles

Rentals:

Aquatics: 403.288.9283  
Mountain Equipment Co-op: 403.269.2420  
Rocky Mountain Paddling Centre: 403.202.8490  
Sports Rent: 403.292.0077  
Undercurrents: 403.262.4327  
U of C Outdoor Program Centre: 403.220.5038

Shuttles:

Louise Shotton Shuttle Service: 403.282.5071  
Bow River Shuttles: 403.278.9165  
Calgary Bow River Shuttle Service: 403.510.0138



Cochrane’s Riversedge campground with River Avenue bridge in the background, May ‘99