

North Saskatchewan River

Devon to Capilano Park, Edmonton

Why Go

These reaches are wonderful day trips, with great vistas of the river valley, the city skyline with easy novice river paddling at most water levels.

Duration of Tour(s)

- * 50 km
- * ½ to 2 Days with many short variations possible



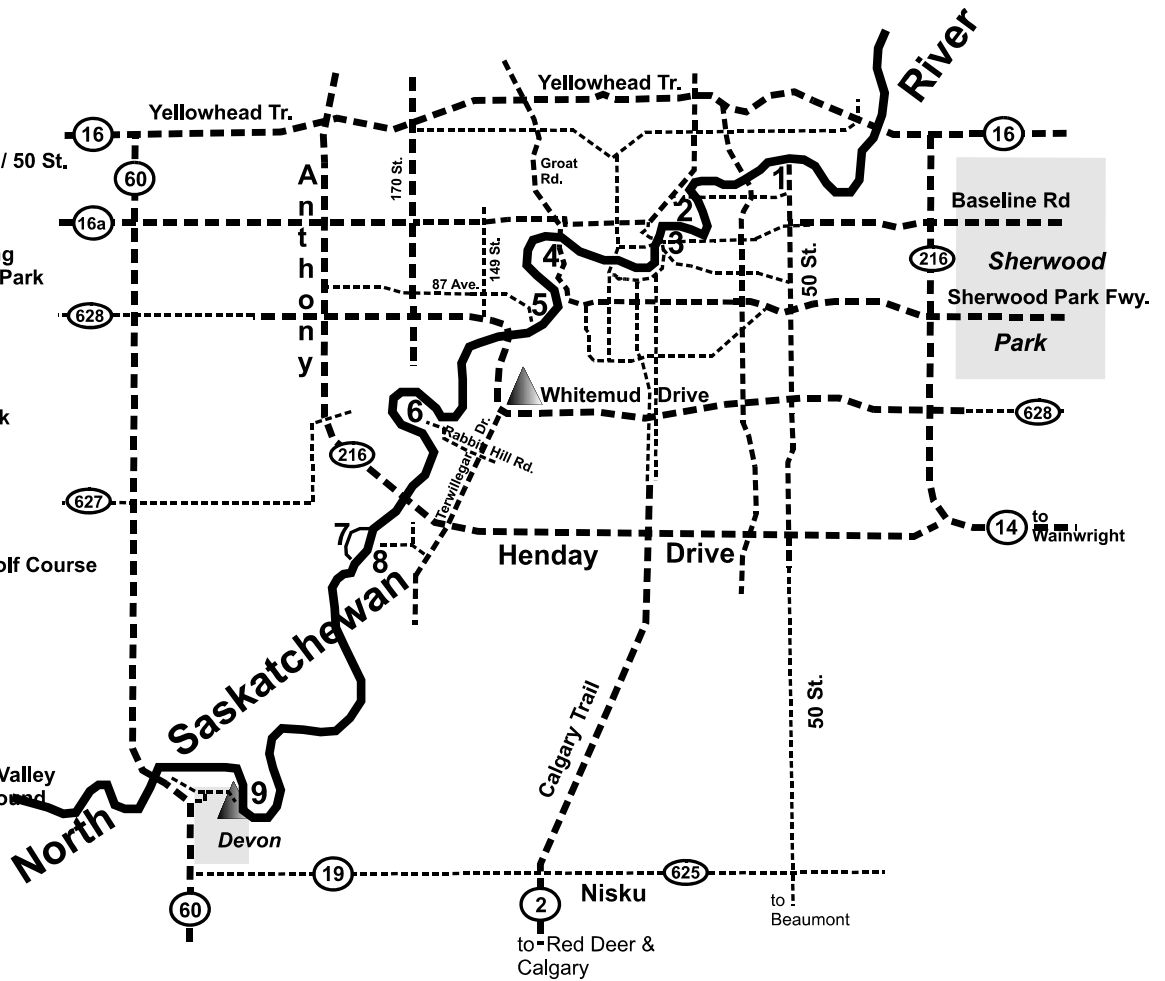
Provincial Archives of Alberta, photo A3007 circa 1937

Classification

1. Rapids: Class I
2. Skill of Paddlers: Novice River Paddlers at low flows, Intermediate River Paddlers at the upper recommended flow range.

Access Points Index

- 1 - Capilano Park / 50 St.
- 2 - Dawson Park
- 3 - Rafters Landing
- 4 - Emily Murphy Park
- 5 - Laurier Park
- 6 - Terwilliger Park
- 7 - Big Island (no road access)
- 8 - River Ridge Golf Course
- 9 - Devon - River Valley Lions Campground



Start

The primary start for this reach is at the new (2005/06) Riverside Park in Devon just downstream of the Highway #60 Bridge on the west side of Devon, and on the east or right side of the river. Access to Riverside Park is via the north Devon access road, south of and just beyond the top of the hill from the river. This should put you on Athabasca Avenue, turn left/north onto Superior St, and then left/west onto Saskatchewan Avenue. This will take you back down the old highway hill to Riverside Park.

Finish

Finish for this run is at the Capilano Park – 50th Street Boat Launch in east central Edmonton, on the south side of the river. Virtually all main east/west roads in Edmonton between Nisku and the river lead to 50th St., and then it is just a matter of heading north to the river.

Intermediate Access and Distances

Location	Elevation meters	Km down	Km up	Km between	Access / Bank or Rapid / Class	MGRS datum NAD 1983 Zone 12 U	Gradient m/km
Devon - Riverside Park		49.6	0.0		right bank	UE 170 170	
River Valley Campground		45.8	3.8	3.8	right bank	UE 199 161	
	630	38.6	11.0				
Big Island - Upstream end		31.7	17.9		left bank	UE 241 239	
River Ridge Golf Club		31.2	18.4		right bank	UE 246 242	
Terwillegar Park		22.4	27.2		right bank	UE 270 291	
Fort Edmonton Hist. Site		18.6	31.0		right bank	UE 288 313	
	620	18.3	31.3				0.5
mouth of Whitemud Creek		17.2	32.4		right bank	UE 301 315	
Laurier Park Boat Launch		16.5	33.1	33.1	left bank	UE 307 318	
Emily Murphy Park / Groat Rd.		11.5	38.1	5.0	right bank	UE 317 349	
Rafters' Landing		6.4	43.2	5.1	right bank	UE 356 351	
Dawson Park		3.9	45.7		left bank	UE 364 363	
Capilano Park / 50 St Boat Launch		0.0	49.6	6.4	right bank	UE 398 375	0.3

Gradient

This is a gentle series of reaches and average gradients are less than .5 m/km over the whole length of this report.

River Volume and Flow Rate

Like the previous run, these reaches are best paddled with 150 to 350 cms or so. Flow rates at the Edmonton station vary from 2 km/hr at 100 cms to over 8 km/hr at 2000 cms.

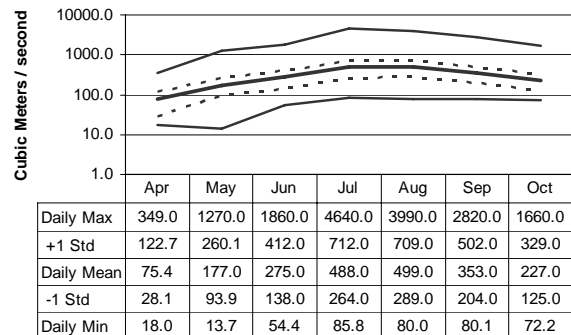
Maps

1 - Probably the most useful maps for this run, are the *Alberta Road Map*, with the Edmonton street map on the backside, and the *Edmonton River Recreation Guide*. In addition the *North Saskatchewan River Guide* is not so much a river guide, as an interpretative manual to all you may see along the river, it is very informative on wildlife, history, and geology.

2 - NTS 1:250,000: 83H Edmonton

NTS 1:50,000: 83H/5 Leduc, 83H/12 St. Albert, 83H/11 Edmonton

North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton



1911 to 2003

Camping

The only public campground on the river for this reach is the Devon Lion's River Valley Campground (780.987.477) on the east side of the town. Take the above mentioned Saskatchewan Avenue east through Devon and down the hill, through the golf course, and stay right for the campground. The river access is to the left just before the campground entrance. The other campground shown above is the Rainbow Valley Campground (780.434.5531) along Whitemud Creek in Edmonton. This campground is well off the river but it is central to Edmonton, and has some very fine tent and trailer sites along the creek

As I go to press (spring 2007) with this edition, Big Island is still provincial crown property with no leaseholder and thus is available for canoe camping. Most every spring the Ceyana canoe club offers a "first of the season" shakedown trip from Devon to Edmonton with camping on Big Island. We like to meet about 1:30 PM in Devon at the Lion's Campground river launch, return our vehicles to Laurier Park, catch a cab back and share the cost. This usually puts us on the river by about 3:30, and into Big Island by 6:30 or so for an evenings camp and hike around the island. We then are up early, and into Laurier park by noonish. This provides a pleasant paddle, camp and still gives two half days for those spring garden chores.

Wildlife

I am always surprised at how much wildlife one sees along these reaches of the river near and in the city. If you are out early or late in the day, beaver sightings are pretty much guaranteed. A wide variety of ducks, gulls, hawks, coyotes, fox and deer can be seen through much of the paddling season.

Trip Notes

These reaches are basic training and evening pleasure runs for Edmonton paddlers. Devon to Edmonton, the "local classic," often surprises novice paddlers with how long it can take. In the past during the K-Days Canoe Regatta the better teams often finished the run from the Lion's Campground in Devon to Whitemud Creek in well under two hours. On the other hand, in the late summer, at low flows or with an upstream breeze, novice paddlers have been known to take seven hours or longer to complete the same reach!

Possibly the most difficult short section is through the islands and bars above Big Island. There can be the occasional log jam here, and elsewhere. For most normal flows the bridge piers and odd boulder are the biggest hazards on this reach.

Now that the access portage at the mouth of Whitemud Creek has been extended, I can see Laurier Park becoming the primary SW Edmonton access. Laurier to Rafters' Landing should become the premier evening or ½ day paddle. Another reach that I use each fall with my Grant MacEwan paddling class is from Emily Murphy to Dawson Park, if a short run is desired, or through to 50th St. if a longer run is the choice of the crew.

For much of the season one does not need to arrange a shuttle. For an evening paddle at low to medium flows, pick any of the access points, throw your boat in and head upstream, either under paddle, or with a pole. Work the eddies along the bank on the inside of the corners, ferry across at the bends and spend an hour or two heading upstream; you'll be surprised at how far you can go. After the workout of the upstream paddling you have the pleasure of drifting back to your vehicle and the joy of NOT having to shuttle!

If you are looking for a practice run or site, one of my favorites is under Groat Road/Bridge. Access if from the south bank in Emily Murphy Park. Early and later in the season there are eddies on the south side, right under the bridge and a number along the north side. An especially large eddy forms just above the bridge at lower flows, and on river left at the outfall of the former Groat Creek. The bridge piers themselves provide a series of eddies for those working their way across the river. I have spent many hours here introducing novice paddlers to eddy turns, ferrying, and setting (back ferrying). If your schedule allows, the intro' session can be followed up with the run down to Rafters' Landing or Dawson Park.

Rentals & Shuttles

Rentals:

Mountain Equipment Co-op 780.488.6614

Totem Outdoor Outfitters 780.432.1223

Shuttles:

A number of taxi companies are available.