

Peace River

Clayhurst Bridge to Peace River

Why Go

Wilderness canoe tripping, and big valley scenery!

Duration of Tour(s)

* 237 km

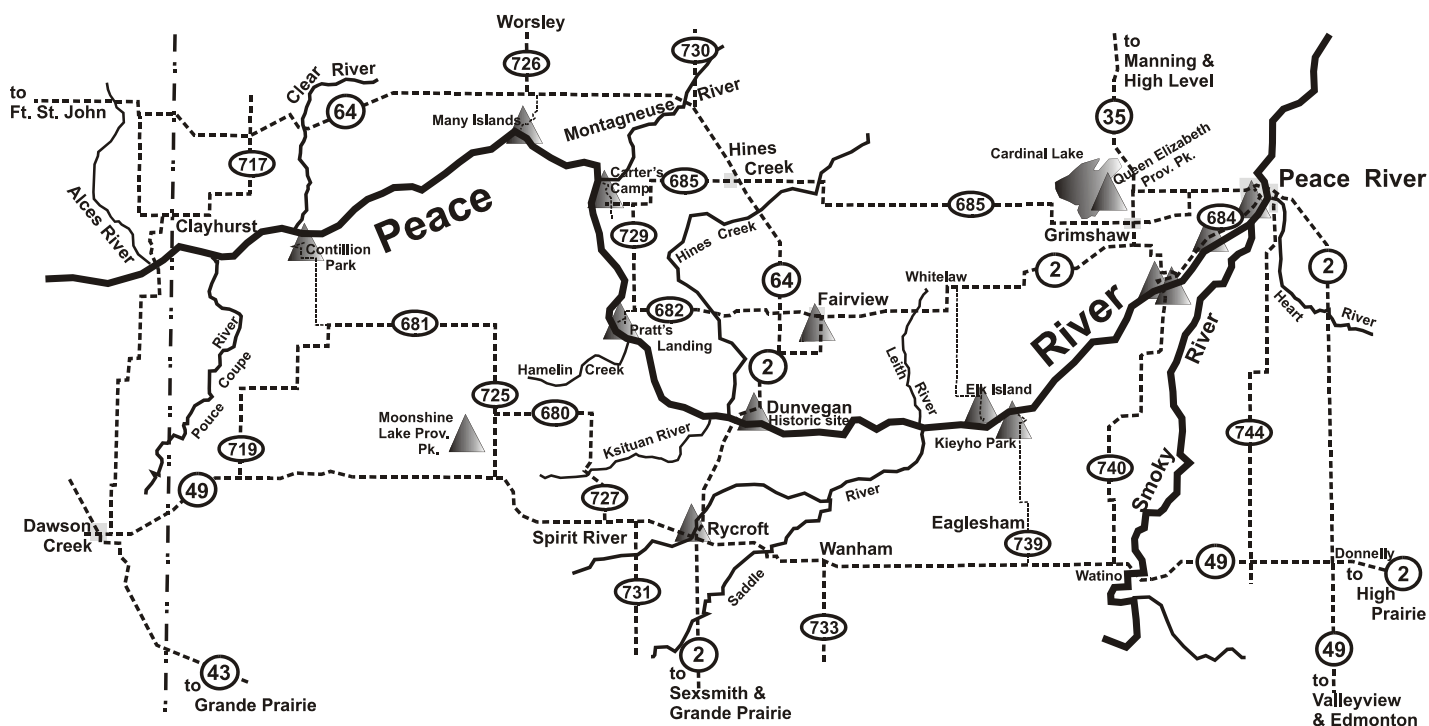
* 1/2 to 7 days

Classification

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



Dunvegan Bridge, July 2002



Start

Clayhurst Bridge is almost due north of Dawson Creek, and is the last crossing of the Peace River in British Columbia. If access at the bridge is difficult (too wet?), there is a picnic area approximately 4 kms downstream of the bridge on the north or left bank.

Finish

The finish noted here is at the town dock in Peace River, near the small park for 12 Foot Davis and the Rowing/Sailing Club. This access is approximately 400 m below the mouth of the Heart River. There is also a boat launch across the river from downtown Peace River which is closer to the town (Lion's) campground.

Intermediate Access and Distances

Location	Elevation meters	Km down	Km up	Km between	Access / Bank or Rapid / Class	MGRS datum NAD 1983 Zone 10V	Gradient m/km
Clayhurst Bridge		237	0			FH 830 240	
Clayhurst Picnic Site		233	4		left bank	FH 858 261	
	381	229	8				
						Zone 11V	
Pouce Coupe River		227	10		right bank	LC 190 245	
Clear River		212	25		left bank	LC 319 287	
Contillion Park / range road 120		211	26		right bank	LC 329 278	
	366	177	60				0.3
Many Islands Park / range road 80		171	67	67	left bank	LC 671 433	
Carters Camp / range road 65		153	84		left bank	LC 791 348	
	351	134	103				0.3
Pratt's Landing / township road 820		129	108		left bank	LC 810 127	
Ksituan River		105	132		right bank		
						Zone 11U	
Dunvegan Bridge		101	136	70	either	LB 996 984	
	335	73	164				0.3
Saddle (Burnt) River		70	167		right bank		
Elk Island Park, south of Whitelaw		60	177		left bank	MB 382 970	
Kieyho Park, north of Eaglesham		54	183		right bank	MB 435 989	
						Zone 11V	
Shaftbury Ferry		25	212	76	either	MC 646 167	
	320	14	223				0.3
Strong Creek Park		13	224		left bank	MC 739 239	
Smoky River		7	230		right bank		
Peace River - downtown dock		0	237	25	right bank	MC 816 321	

Gradient

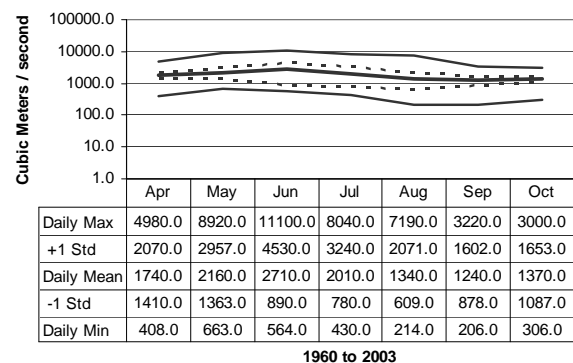
Gradients on this reach are pretty consistent at 0.3 m/km! But surprisingly, on the run south down to Dunvegan Bridge there can be some pressure waves, kinda bouncy and kinda fun.

River Volume and Flow Rate

This is a BIG river. For the Dunvegan station in the middle of this reach, flows in the 700 to 2600 cms range should provide good paddling, though the larger flows may reduce the banks for camping. This really is a run best left for August or later when other streams start getting too low for good paddling.

During a mid-July run in 2002, with approximately 2500 cms, our GPS unit reported velocities of 6-9 km/hr when drifting and we had no problem averaging 8-10 kms per hour on the river during our trip. At Dunvegan the reported velocity ranges from 3 km/hr at 500 cms to 7 km/hr at 6000 cms.

Peace River at Dunvegan



Maps

1 - The *Alberta Road Map*, and a set of 1:250,000 sheets may be all you need. If you are planning on using some of the lesser traveled to access points I would suggest purchasing the relevant county/municipality maps, or at least referring to them and annotating your NTS sheet with the up-dated road info.

2 - NTS 1:250,000

94 A Charlie Lake

83 M Grande Prairie

84 C Peace River

84 D Clear Hills

83 N Winagami (very little - I'd borrow this sheet and draw it in!)

Camping

There are a number of very nice public campgrounds along these reaches to support either day tripping or the start or end of a longer trip. In the 1990s it appears the local municipalities got together to develop the Upper Peace Valley Recreation Area. Contillion Park, Many Islands, Carters Camp, Pratt's Landing, Elk Island Park and Kieyho Park are the result. Each of these parks has unserviced (no power) camping, cook shelters and boat launches. Many Islands Park also has a group camp area (780.685.2560 to reserve). Other campsite contacts include: The Lion's Club Campground (780.624.2120) in Peace River, Strong Creek Park (780.338.3845), and the Dunvegan Historic site (780.538.5350)

This is a river for tripping and the best camping comes in the late summer and fall when the high waters are past and the banks have had some time to dry out. On our July 1983 paddle with the family, I have some vivid memories of one camp where everyone lost their rubber boots in the deep, sucking mud. Many of the side stream fans provide a gravel beach and can provide acceptable campsites. Below the Shaftsbury Ferry be aware that Highway #684 does parallel the river so pick a campsite on the opposite side of an island. There is also considerable private land on both sides of the river below the Shaftsbury Ferry so the islands are the best campsite choices.

Wildlife

In 2002 when we paddled the Dunvegan stretch, we were just about always in visual contact with at least one small family group of mule or whitetail deer. Moose and bear are also common to the Peace Valley, and bears should be considered a risk in all camps along these reaches.

The Peace River valley is so deep, nearly 300 m in places that it has generated its own micro climate. Dunvegan has long been a centre for market gardening. The valley is also the most northerly limit of garter snakes and prickly pear cactus (on the south facing slopes) in Alberta.

Trip Notes

As noted, save this river for mid to late season paddling. Go for the scenery and a leisurely paddle, or for the sense of history. This river was part of the trans-continental fur trade route, and was used by McKenzie in his historic crossing of North America.

Other Reaches

In the above mention 1983 trip we paddled from just above Hudson's Hope right through to Dunvegan with our young family of the time. Except for some easy Class II water just above Hudson's Hope it is a pretty flat paddle, but very scenic right through to this reach reported on here. There is approximately 120 km of paddling available from Hudson's Hope to the Clayhurst Bridge.

Other Local Activities or Destinations

The historic site at Dunvegan is well worth the time to visit. In the town of Peace River, be sure to check out one of the memorials to 12 Foot Davis. Alexander Mackenzie wintered just above "the forks" in 1793 on his way to the Pacific Ocean, and a memorial to this fort is located along Highway #684 south of Peace River towards the Shaftsbury Settlement and Ferry.

Shuttles

On both my canoe trips into the town of Peace River I have used Peace River Taxi (780.624.3020) for both the shuttle and vehicle storage during the trip.