

## The Best Novice Whitewater on the Arkansas River, CO - Revised: Monday, July 06, 2009

These are best novice whitewater sections I know of on the Arkansas River, CO. They are mostly in the BV-Canyon City valleys based upon low flows on the Arkansas River. By low flows, I mean less than 1500cfs. Higher flows may add to the difficulty rating listed below. I generally suggest running relatively short sections, working them hard, and making them fun. Our basic philosophy will be Tom Foster's "Catch every eddy & Surf every wave."

- Remember, "This is not Worlds-of-Fun". Anything can happen to anyone for any number of reasons.
- Whether it is scouting, running rapids, or even floating along on fast moving Class I water, things can go wrong to anyone.
- Keep an eye out for others. Remember to use good river etiquette.
- Using the buddy system can add to your river security.
- Always be prepared and stay alert for any potential hazard. These can be trees, submerged rocks, hydraulics, powerful eddies, nearby rafts, or other kayaks.
- If your trip coordinator suggests portaging or even taking out, please do so without whining.
- Have the right gear, including rescue gear, along to help.
- Have the right river clothing along.
- Don't exceed your skill level.
- If you have questions, ASK THEM.

### In order of their Public Access or Public land appearance downriver from Brown's Canyon:

1. Stone Bridge - Big Bend (overall: Class II w/ (1) Class III-) - 4.2 miles - contains: Squaw Creek Rapid (Class III-). These are both public accesses.
2. Big Bend - Salida, CO (FIBARK Boat Ramp (public access) - 4.5 miles: contains minor rapids & riffles, but has a low head dam in the middle of the run. There is now a sign & portage route on river left. There is also a runnable (Class II-III slot on river left. CAUTION: DO NOT RUN RIVER RIGHT.
3. Salida East - Rincon (overall: Class II w/ (1) Class III-) - 7.5 miles, contains: Bear Creek Rapids (Class III-), Spider Rapids (Class II+), and numerous Class II rapids.
4. Hanging Bridge - Rincon (Class II) - 5.0 miles - This allows a launch below Bear Creek rapids, thus eliminating the major Class III rapids on the Salida East - Rincon Run. The access is approximately 2.5 miles below Salida East on a pull out on river right. It is also .5 miles upstream of the Wellsville Bridge if you are coming from downstream. There is a steep gravelly river bank access on BLM public land, so watch your step lowering your boats. NOTE: There "used" to be a hanging bridge here years ago but there is nothing left now but a large boulder near the access where a steel spike can be found.
5. Rincon-Vallie Bridge (overall: Class III) - 8.5 miles, contains Badger Creek Rapids (Class III-), The Flume (Class II+), Tin Cup Rapids (Class III), and Red Rocks (Class II+).
6. Vallie Bridge-Canyon Trading Post (overall: Class III) - 4.5 miles, contains Rock Garden Rapids, aka Railroad Rapids (Class III), Cottonwood Rapids (Class III+ - IV-), and Little Cottonwood Rapids (Class II+). This is a pretty beefy run for Novice paddlers. Recommend scouting and/or portaging Cottonwood Rapids.
7. Canyon Trading Post - Lone Pine (overall: Class II) - 4.6 miles, contains a few unnamed Class II rapids.
8. Lone Pine - Texas Creek (overall: Class II) - 5.1 miles, contains Warm Up Rapids (Class III-) and several unnamed Class II rapids.

### Other so called novice whitewater sections on the Arkansas River (located above Brown's Canyon, include:

1. Milk Run [Johnson Village-Fishermen's Bridge] - 3.8 miles (Class II-III) - I don't like training on this section because the rapids are run directly opposite of a desirable teaching sequence. In other words, Milk Run begins with a busy Class III section that can be intimidating to Novice paddlers often including swims at the very start & ending with a long boring Class I section.
2. Fisherman's Bridge - Ruby Mountain - 1.9 miles (Class II with strainers). I don't like training on this section either since it is very short and generally contains strainers.

You will not find the above Arkansas River runs listed in Colorado Rivers & Creeks. AHRA (Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area) has some FREE Maps at: <http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/ArkansasHeadwaters/>. If you have never been to CO to paddle, be prepared for chilly water and ever changing weather conditions, but mid-late July should be rather friendly with lower flows. You will want some decent paddling tops and bottoms, but dry suits will NOT be necessary this time of year. You will be expected to help in any rescues so please have a rescue bag ready to use and some basic rescue skills to help out your fellow paddlers. Always tie in your gear & have your floatation bags fully inflated. Remember to mark your boat, paddle, and gear with your name & phone number in permanent marker or engraving. Remember also to have some cash handy to buy your daily permits. Currently: \$6/vehicle. NOTE: You can put as many people in a vehicle as you want. *The fines, from AHRA rangers that frequent each access, are considerable so don't forget or blow off your permit. The excuses of ignorance or forgetfulness most often doesn't account for sympathy.*

Pack lunches, sun screen, & plenty of drinking water for the river, even for short runs. Have your throw rope ready for use, your best PFD securely on, and your best helmet ready. In other words, please have your best "paddling hat" on.