

Pikes Peak River Runners

Green River Rising May 2005



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King & Keith Fuqua

This year is starting off much better than last season (see [Grand Evacuation story](#)) and by Memorial weekend we have already run the [Salt](#) and Taos Box (four weekends at ever increasing flows up to 4,500 cfs). Memorial weekend we managed to pick up a cancelled Green (Gates of Lodore) permit. Better yet, Flaming Gorge dam was releasing substantial water. In fact, we got a minimum of 6000, 7500 and 18000 cfs at the confluence for our river trip.

Trip Participants: Pete & Christina King, Ralph & Mark Hoffman, Jeff & Karen Hodge, Bill & Irene Cooke, Beth & Eric Roren, Pat Campanello & Betsy Miller, and Keith Fuqua.



Day 1, Pot Creek camp, May 29, 2005, Sunday (6000 cfs)

We arrived at the Gates of Lodore put-in with many Memorial weekend campers enjoying the area but no other groups launching. No launches arrived either day we were at the put-in and we enjoyed a flawless 2-plane fly [Dinaland Aviation](#) shuttle. Our pilots John Gardiner and Donnie flew a scenic shuttle with lots of opportunities to take pictures. I got good aerial photos of Hell's Half Mile, Steamboat Rock, and Island Park.





Hells Half Mile, Steamboat Rock, Island Park

We landed on the dirt road and (thanks to Ralph) hitchhiked a ride back down to the put-in from a friendly hiker and her son in their truck. We launched quickly after a quick ranger checkout and enjoyed the warm weather. Our lunch stop was at Wade and Curtis campground (steep, very slick bank) but nice camp. The fast current makes drifting down the river a piece of cake. Lots of willows and tamarisk are under water because the typical flows on the Green (Gates of Lodore) are 1000-2000 cfs. The high flows are being released to simulate natural spring runoff for the spawning native fish.



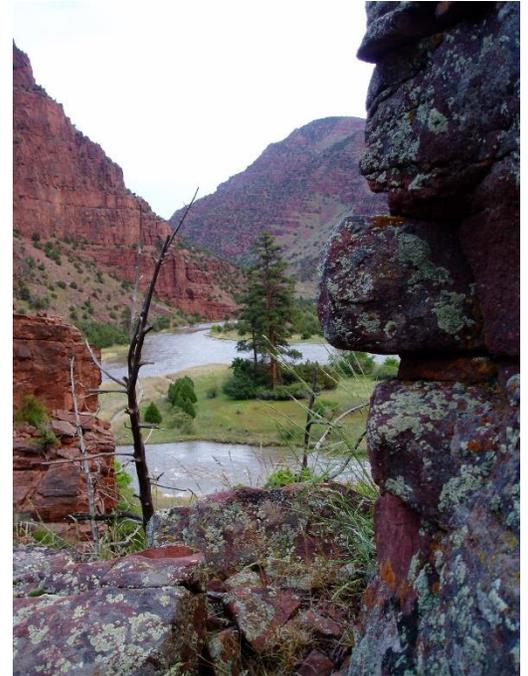
Winnie's rapid is easy, just a rock in the river really. We do not typically scout any rapids other than Hell's Half Mile but played it cautious and scouted Upper Disaster Falls. It was a straightforward left of center drop with nice waves and we continued through Lower Disaster Falls with no problems. Keith had an interesting meeting with the rock on Lower Disaster Falls and was not sure how it would end up (all okay). Saw several Big Horn sheep (rams, ewes and two lambs) along the river as we floated along. We pulled into a wonderful sand beach (great for boats) at Pot Creek camp. Lots of fish in Pot Creek. Got to set up tents just in time for a hard rain/hailstorm which cleared quickly.

Enjoyed a wonderful Szechwan Chicken prepared by Keith and share a round robin of cookies for dessert that end up on Karen's lap.

Jeff, Betsy, and I walked across the creek (up the canyon a bit) and enjoyed the views from a rock overlook with fantastic views up and down river.

Day 2, Jones Hole 1, May 30, 2005, Monday (7500 cfs)

River is up this morning and approaching our tent door quickly after breakfast. Seemed like it rained all night, but we stayed warm and dry. We start a packing-up frenzy when we quickly take down our tent. I notice Pot Creek 2 is also a nice camp but smaller (not as sandy beach-more rocks) for boats. We have not seen anyone all yesterday and early today on the river (nice and quiet). Ralph runs lead for about 20 minutes until we reach Harp Falls (false alarm for Triplet Falls) and then we continue on to scout Triplet Falls. Harp Falls was filled with fun rollers. Triplet is a relatively easy run down the center and then left. Ralph had a "perfect" run way left while in the meantime, two of our boats passed him during the rapid. We turn a corner and recognize the horizon line drop of Hell's Half mile. It is our big rapid of the trip. We scout and see several entries. Several of us enter different slots (usually only one good entry at lower water) and run through the big waves easily and take the center channel at the end of the rapid. No matter which entry was made it seemed to funnel everyone to the center of the rapid. I am finding that the runs in Lodore are easier at higher water than the typical low flows.



It is a cold day, and we are all wearing warm clothes. Irene even put on her ski goggles. No echoes at Steamboat Rock today. The Yampa joins the Green and the flow jumps up to 18,000 cfs. We enjoy a lunch out of the wind at Echo Park but have no desire walk up to Refrigerator Cave or the petroglyphs due to the cold wind. The weather worsens after lunch. Rain and pelting hail drive us to clamp on our helmets for protection. Waterfalls are literally forming in front of our eyes along the high canyon walls. I have seen

many river waterfalls from thunderstorms, but it is amazing to see each waterfall begin its mad torrent down



each stairstep cliff ledge. We see other rafting groups sheltering under rock overhangs to get out of the rain/hail. The eddy's in Whirlpool canyon are strong due to the high flows. It is cold, and I row to keep warm. Thank goodness the flows quickly carry us down river. It rains/hails on us all the way to Jones Hole 1 camp. Immediately after arriving at camp, the rain stops. We set up our parawing and personal tents. Changing into warm dry clothes is wonderful. Some of us walk up Jones Hole canyon. I have never camped at Jones Hole 1 before and really like it compared to Jones (2-4) camps. Usually, the outfitters have this camp, but we have seen an unusually low number of groups on the river. Unfortunately, they have carefully dismantled (and kept the parts) the foot bridge across the creek. This requires boaters at Jones 1 camp to ford the creek to get up the canyon. After changing to warm dry clothes, I am not motivated to get wet up to my

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knees again. Instead, I meander up the canyon on the right side of the creek to a scenic overlook. Irene baked Pete a birthday cake and decorated the kitchen parawing. Bill served us tasty BBQ ribs for dinner. Keith finalized the planning for our upcoming back-to-back Selway Idaho river trips. Great evening with no more rain.

Day 3, Split Mountain, May 31, 2005, Tuesday, 18,000 cfs

We wake to a cloudy morning which gives way to blue skies and warmer temps by Split Mountain (our takeout). I have had only one other trip where the float was so easy through the flat water of Island Park (also high water on the Yampa). No wind! I observed two Big Horn rams flirting with two ewes as we float out of the steep canyon walls into Island Park. One group of boaters scouted Moonshine rapid as we entered the rapid. Moonshine sported large waves with a pour-over domer at the bottom. Avoiding the domer was simple to avoid. The remaining rapids (SOB, Schoolboy, Ingelsby) were straight forward read and run. We floated into the Split Mountain takeout with minimal effort at noon. Overall, the rapids at these flows are easier than lower water but you need to be able to read and react to the rapids. Fast water and cold water can always contribute to danger if mishaps happen.





