

True North Outdoor *the spirit of adventure*

Wilderness Adventures by Canoe



The Spey from Newtonmore to the sea is the classic open-boater's journey. It is one of the Great Britains' classic paddles and invariably features in the top ten of UK paddles. From start to finish the journey is 80 or so miles and falls some 238 metres along its length.

The river Spey is one of the most beautiful salmon rivers in Britain and can usually be relied on to give reasonable water levels in all seasons. It has an interesting character, as, unlike most rivers, it starts off very gently at Newtonmore campsite and gradually gets more chunky as the river flows towards the sea. This makes the journey more exciting as the conditions become more demanding as we get used to working the boat and the weight decreasing as we eat our way through the rations.

Though we will travel unsupported and the usual campcraft skills will be needed, the accent will be on journeying and we will stop at a variety of wild and semi-formal campsites en route, some of which may even boast the luxury of a proper loo. As a rough itinerary we can expect the following, but this depends on how we feel, the river state and the weather:

- Day 1 – Newtonmore to beyond Aviemore.
- Day 2 – Aviemore to Boat of Balliefurth
- Day 3 – Boat of Balliefurth to Blacksboat
- Day 4 – Blacksboat to Boat O Brig.
- Day 5 – Boat o Brig to Spey Bay.

With ever-changing views and character, the Spey flows through the Insh marshes with its abundance of bird-life including Ospreys, Loch Insh itself (and the possibility for getting under sail) and then through woodland with occasional spectacular views of the Cairngorms glimpsed through the trees lining the bank.

On the way there are a series of entertaining rapids at a sporting grade 2 with nothing too technical to worry about and there is invariably a pool at the bottom of each to collect one's thoughts and exchange some banter. The highlight of the rapids is the infamous 'Washing Machine' which is just shy of a camp at Blacksboat.

We will be passing Aviemore and Grantown and through the Spey single malt country which resounds to the famous names of Cragganmore, Aberlour and Knockando. Perhaps we could even take a brief visit to a distillery; purely in the interests of industrial history and cultural integration en route.

Finally, the river ends in a powerful and exhilarating rush through the shifting shingle banks to the open sea of Spey Bay.

There is an abundance of plants, birdlife, fish and mammals and on previous trips we have seen otters, sea otters, osprey and seals in the bay.



The River Spey