

DESTINATIONS

NEWS FOR ADVENTUROUS TRAVELERS

WHITEWATER RAFTING

The New Frontiers

AN ESTIMATED THREE MILLION AT LAST COUNT, the population of whitewater rafting enthusiasts in the United States has doubled in the last ten years. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the number of whitewater rivers, which the laws of geology have pretty well fixed for the next few thousand years. Factor in airfares, trip prices, and your limited vacation time and...well, you do the math, but the bottom line is that it's getting

harder and harder to avoid the float 'n' bloat mob, particularly on classic domestic runs like the Grand Canyon and the Gauley.

For this reason, many new trips tend to take place on remote and cutting-edge rivers—Class Vs like Chile's Futaleufu or Peru's Colca Canyon, which demand advanced whitewater skills and can be costly in terms of both time and money. Fortunately for the deskbound or intermediate rafter, there are still some frontiers out there that are not only undiscovered, but also relatively accessible.

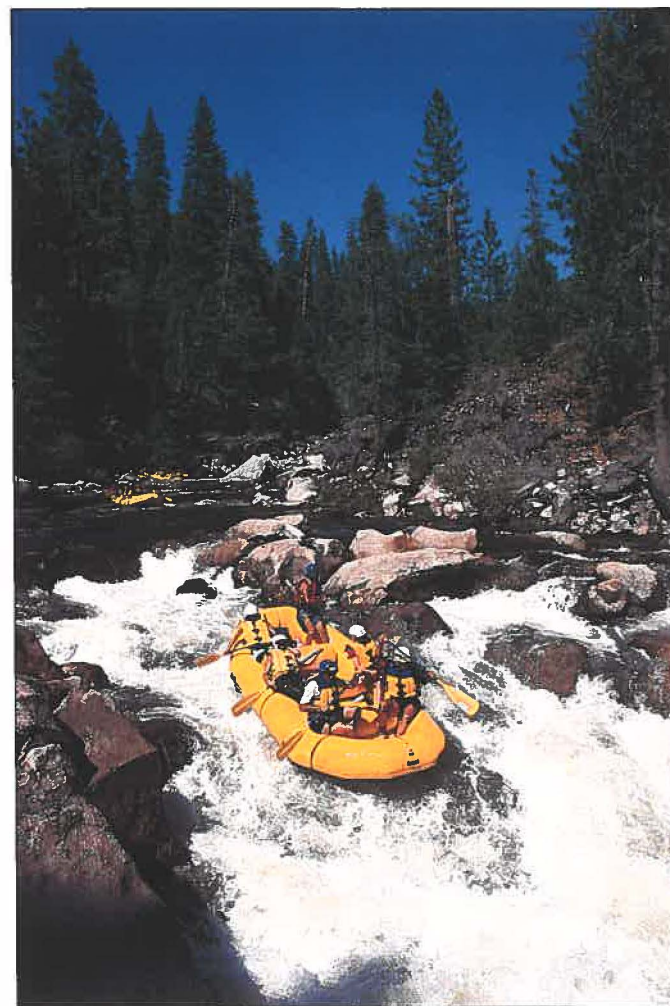
The Magpie, Quebec

This Class IV pool-and-drop river has been run commercially only since 1992, and so infrequently that its rapids don't even have names yet. As one of a scant handful of multiday trips east of the Rockies, the Magpie's big draw is its isolation: Guides at Earth River Expeditions, the sole outfitter, swear that "there's not a chance in a thousand that you'll see

another human being."

Participants fly to the put-in via floatplane, then drift and paddle 40 miles in six days through deep granite gorges and forests inhabited by bears, moose, and ospreys. Day three involves what may be the world's only aircraft-assisted portage, around 80-foot Magpie Falls. (The rafts and supplies fly the half-mile; you hike it.) The rapids gradually build to a climactic Class IV+ that deposits you at the take-out, just upstream from the Magpie's confluence with the St. Lawrence.

Earth River Expeditions (800-643-2784) will run one Magpie trip this year, August 21–28. The cost per person is \$1,300 U.S. The jumping-off point is Sept-Îles, Quebec, which is best reached by Air Canada via Montreal or by car from the northeastern United States.



Hope for the Magpie, slated to be damed.