

How to do Shirttail

The Shirttail run (on the North Fork of the American River just east and north of the town of Auburn, California) can be run by as few as two people (intermediate IKers) each having an IK and a vehicle. Here's how:

- 1) Meet at 10 AM at the Raley's parking lot that's located just off U.S. 80 at the east end of Auburn (take the Foresthill offramp).
- 2) Drive both vehicles south (about 10 miles) down Foresthill Road to the Upper Lake Clementine Recreation Area. Pay the \$10 fee at the entrance kiosk and drive your vehicles down to the river. This is the take-out.
- 3) Leave one vehicle here together with whatever goods you want available when you return downriver many hours from now (a dry change of clothes and a cooler full of beer, for instance).
- 4) The both of you and all the gear you'll need on-river go into your other vehicle.
- 5) Drive back up the long dirt road, past the little kiosk, to Foresthill Road. Turn right, and drive back the way you originally came, back to U.S. 80.
- 6) Turn right (east) onto U.S. 80 and drive about 10 miles to the Weimar Cross turnoff. At the end of the turnoff you come to a "T".
- 7) Turn left at the "T" (onto Ponderosa Road). Drive just a couple miles until you come to Yankee Jim Road. Turn right onto Yankee Jim Road and follow your nose until you come to the bridge over the river. This is your put-in.
- 8) From here on it's easy, right? It's four miles downriver to the Ponderosa Road bridge. This water is rated class II+ at normal summertime flows (500-1000 CFS). The most challenging rapids occur within the first two miles.

9) From the Ponderosa Road bridge to the Upper Lake Clementine Recreation Area (where you left your vehicle) is another four miles. This water is rated class II at normal summertime flows (500-1000 CFS).

Some observations:

You'd prefer flows toward the upper end of "normal summertime". Having the extra current makes the paddling easier. That said, this section of the American has little of the "pool" part of the "pool and drop" that's characteristic of the rivers that flow west out of the Sierras.

The water can be cold (especially in late spring and early summer), so consider wearing cold water protective gear of some sort. (The photo above was shot in early May on a cloudy day with the air temperature in the low 70s.)

On this section of this river, there is very little evidence of human presence. So you get this kind of experience:

There's a nice little waterfall (Codfish Falls) about a mile past the Ponderosa Road Bridge. It's on river right about a hundred yards back from the beach. Look for the creek entering the river.

You can get a more-detailed description of the run by checking out Bill Tuttle's California Creeks site:

<http://www.cacreeks.com/amer-nlo.htm>

You can check the current flow of almost any California creek or river here:

<http://www.dreamflows.com/flows.php?zone=canv&page=real&form=norm&mark=All#California West Sierra Northern>

(You're looking for "No. American - Inflow Lake Clementine" under the heading "California West Sierra – Northern".)

And you can get a bunch of photos (culled, cropped, and captioned) of one run of Shirttail (done in early May of 2018) here:

<http://www.pbase.com/cfs/allbyyear1805&page=all>

That's all, folks!

Oh, the birds ...

Richard Lawrence says they're penguins. He sounds pretty sure
(and he says he watches lots of nature programs on PBS),
but I don't know.

larry
:)