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Secret Whitewater Fix  
**Rapid Transit**

Flush with western Montana's signature sapphire runoff, the Upper Middle Fork of the Flathead is the best float trip you've never heard of. Geography is the Flathead's own permit system – the put-in is tucked away in the Great Bear Wilderness, south of Glacier National Park – so traffic is limited to those willing to fly a Cessna 206 into Schafer Meadows' backcountry airstrip from Kalispell or horsepack their gear six miles along Granite Creek to the put-in. The river is narrow and steep, meaning you'll want a slim sports car or a raft and heads-up guiding to make a clean run through four days of Class IV rapids to the take-out at Bear Creek. You'll camp in Douglas fir and lodgepole pine forests surrounded by the jagged peaks of the Flathead Range, pick rising 20-inch cutthroat out of the herd with a dry fly, and hike to Castle Lake with the cirque-born waterfall that feeds it. The best whitewater is before July, but the fishing peaks later that month during the caddis-and-stone-fly hatch. Four days, \$1,095 (\$100 extra for horse-packed trips); Glacier Raft Company, 406-888-5454, [www.glacierraftco.com](http://www.glacierraftco.com).

--Grayson Schaffer