

# What is in this Guide

This guide is made with the intent of covering anything that you might need to know when speedrunning Hydro Thunder for the Nintendo 64, from the basics to the more difficult tech in the game, as well as having a guide for each track for the most optimal routing. While much of this guide can be applied to other ports of the game, this guide is specifically made for the Nintendo 64 version, and as such may have routes or tech that differs from other versions of the game. This guide was started by JBFcrasher, but has significant contributions from both Inphlox and AxlThunder. Because this is a Google Doc it will be easy to update as new routes and strategies are found and implemented. This game has evolved quite a bit, even in the last year or two. I will do my best to keep this updated. If you have any questions, concerns, or think this guide could be improved in any way feel free to reach out to me.

## General tips and tricks

### Console vs Emulator:

Hydro Thunder on N64 is a very laggy game, it plays noticeably slower (as much as 40-50% in some sections of tracks) on console compared to emulator. I personally think console is actually easier to play because of this lag, however it doesn't lag at the same amount between different tracks, or even at different points of the same track so this may not be easier for you if you prefer a consistent gameplay speed. When speedrunning this game, we use the in-game time, not real time, so this performance difference will not cause emulator players to have an inherent advantage of running at the game's intended speed.

### Boost Starts:

#### Super Start

When starting a race, press and hold the A button when the 3 in the countdown starts to fade, release when the 2 starts to fade, then press and hold again when the 1 starts to fade

This starts you out with greater initial speed from the launch, and gives you a 4 second boost

## **Hydro jump start**

Similar to performing the boost start, but instead of just releasing the A button at the 2, swap to holding the B button, then at the 1 swap back to the A button. This jumps you into the air briefly with a small amount of additional forward momentum. Not worth going for this start over the normal boost start

# **Speed Management**

## **General**

A good rule of thumb is to keep an eye on the speedometer when possible. That way you can see what's going on with your current speed below 300 MPH. It also allows you to see exactly when to stop holding boost upon reaching top speed if you start off lower than in the red range. If you're trying to get back up to speed, hold boost until you get there, then start boost management.

## **Hydro jumping**

You can perform a hydro jump by holding the brake then pressing the boost button, the longer you hold the boost the higher you jump. Hydro jumping is used constantly when speedrunning this game

## **Bounce Jumping**

If you hydro jump as you are landing and are lower in the water than you are during normal driving, either when landing from another hydro jump, from a ramp or drop in the track, you can jump higher than you would be able to just traveling normally. This can be combined with a shift jump, This is a lesser used piece of speed tech, only having one spot requiring it to get the fastest time, there are a handful of places that this can be used as one of a couple different options.

## **Hydro Jump chaining and Air Speed vs Water Speed**

Hydro jump chaining is probably the most important skill to learn when going for competitive times. While in the air you have no drag, and as such are able to maintain more speed than if

you are in the water, you can take advantage of this by hydro jumping whenever you have overspeed. You can gain overspeed without the use of a speed surface, like ramps or slides, by boosting and repeatedly hydro jumping to stay in the air as much as possible. This significantly hinders your ability to turn, but allows for much higher speed when traveling in a straight line or around small turns. It is possible to buffer a hydro jump while airborne, if you input a hydro jump and continue to hold it until you hit the water, you will hydro jump the same frame that you come into contact with the water. The window for this buffer is not very large, but when falling in the air you can generally start holding the inputs when you are roughly 2-3 times the height of your boat at the earliest. You will know this is done correctly because you will not hear the splash sound effect when you hydro jump, nicknamed the splashless jump. This maintains the most speed possible when performing consecutive hydro jumps since you are only in contact with the water for a single frame.

## **Overspeed**

Overspeed is when your boat is traveling faster than its intended maximum speed while boosting in the water. Overspeed is crucial in achieving good times.

## **Ramp Speed**

The surface of ramps will accelerate your boat faster than you can achieve while in the water, however when the ramp is too steep, you will collide into the bottom of it and lose some speed before it starts to accelerate you. Some of the steeper ramps are not worth taking as you will net lose speed when taking them.

## **Other Speed Surfaces**

There are several instances of surfaces in the game that will give you increased speed, sometimes quite significantly over what is normally possible. To make the most of these surfaces, you will want to have your boat remain in contact with the surface and avoid being in the water if possible. Examples include the secret tunnel in Arctic Circle between the second and third checkpoint and the secret tunnel to the left of the first corner on The Far East.

## **Redirect**

There is a mechanic in Hydro Thunder where if you get turned around, the game will turn you back the correct direction and keep any speed you had, but change the direction of that velocity to be facing down the track. As it turns out, this mechanic can be abused. The only check the game makes to see if you are going the wrong way is to see which way you are facing. Due to this being the only check, it is possible to hydro jump before a 90 degree turn, turn the boat around in the air, and have the game redirect your momentum around the corner, carrying far

more speed than would normally be possible to take around the corner if you were to take it normally. Redirects do not happen instantly, it takes a small amount of time for the game to be “sure” that you are going the wrong way. When you are facing 90 degrees or more away from the intended direction of the track, the game will start an internal timer to see if you turn back the correct direction, and if you are still turned around by the end of this timer, the game will redirect you and face you in the correct direction. Redirects are one of the most powerful pieces of tech in Hydro Thunder, however, they can also be quite difficult to get a good feel for.

## **Drag reduction**

There is a specific angle range, approximately 15-30 degrees away from your direction of momentum, that allows you to go slightly faster by reducing the drag on your boat in the water, allowing you to use less boost to maintain maximum speed.

## **Shifting**

When your boat is rotating, it does not necessarily rotate around the center point of the boat, instead it can rotate around a point much closer to the front of the boat, which causes the bulk of the boat to shift to one side when turning. Most noticeable in Tinytanic, but is useful for most other boats. This can be beneficial in a couple ways, the first of which is that you can use this to slightly shift your boat to one side or the other to avoid obstacles. The other, more important use is shift jumping.

## **Shift Jumping**

Expanding upon shifting, Shift Jumping is used when going off ramps or when hydro jumping. If you make a hard left or right turn when going off the ramp, the acceleration from the ramp will stack on top of the temporarily increased speed you gain from rotating your boat, causing you to take the ramp with more speed. This can also be used to get more speed from hydro jumping by jumping right at the peak of the momentum swing, but this is much harder to pull off consistently. Trying for these is not recommended until you can consistently Hydro Jump, as if you fail to jump, you will likely ram into a wall.

# Cornering

## Water Cornering

Sudden sharp turns will significantly reduce your speed. For tight turns, like narrow 90 degrees and hairpins, it's better to full boost throughout the turn's duration. Although taking tight turns can obviously save time by traveling less distance, taking a wider approach to a turn can sometimes help by minimizing the reduction to your speed and enabling you to return to your max speed more quickly, this is applicable on hairpin turns especially.

## In Air Cornering

While boosting in air, you can turn your boat and are able to make it around some corners without needing to be in the water. This is useful because you can take some corners while carrying more speed than the boat is able to maintain while in the water. Cutthroat and Blowfish do this best. Be careful, though, as if you're more than 80 or so degrees away from the direction of momentum, you will not be able to jump if you land before the turn ends. If you're above this threshold and you still can turn, you can turn back to within the range just before hitting the water so you can jump again, and continue making the turn. You will also lose a lot of speed if you turn too sharply.

# Map Specifics

Listed below are each of the tracks and the route/strategy for achieving WR level times. For those newer to speedrunning this game, most of the tech can be added on a step at a time. First get used to the path you are supposed to take, then work on adding in some hydro jumps and jump chains, then work in some redirects. The point is that you don't have to do everything all at once, but when competing for the world record, this should walk you through everything needed to get you there.

## Easy Tracks

Easy maps are unlocked from the beginning

## Thunder Park

TP is a three-lap track composed of a single hairpin turn, many more gradual turns, two ramps, and a straightaway finish. The track is positively littered with boosts throughout, but you can only collect each boost once! A competitive run for TP hinges upon excellent cornering and wise boost management.

For advice on navigating the track's many turns, reference the section on Cornering under General tips and tricks.

In theory, you can collect the boosts in any order as long as you never max out your boost bar, thus wasting precious boost. The only hidden boost lies inside of the floating Banshee on the last straightaway. There is not enough boost on the track to full boost all three laps, so make sure to prioritize full boosting on turns and conserving boost on straightaways by tap boosting. For the long straightaway around the finish line, perform a series of Hydro Jumps to gain some noticeable timesave over staying in the water. Hitting the goal post is not ideal, as you are unable to continue gaining speed while your boat is in tumble. However, you do not lose speed either, so hitting the goal post is still preferable to staying in the water.

Once consistently able to get good runs on this track, there is a redirect possibility at the second to last corner of the lap. This saves minimal time so not worth going for until needing to squeeze out that last little bit of time save.

## Lost Island

Begin the track by almost immediately hydro jumping over the first ramp and proceed to chain jumps around the first corner and into the cave. Be careful when doing so to not turn so sharply that you are more than 90 degrees from the direction of momentum as that will slow you down. Collect the 9 second boost in the cave and start hydro jump chaining again, careful to not go too high as you can hit the ceiling. After rejoining the track, continue the jump chain to the left into the secret. Take tight corners through the secret and as you leave the cave you can cut the small corner by hydro jumping over it.

Continue off the ramp and take the right turn on the water, then once it straightens out begin another hydro jump chain. Keep this chain going while turning as sharp as you can around the sweeping left turn and try to center yourself so you line up with the 4 second boost at the beginning of the next cave section.

Take the right corner then as the cave opens up do another hydro jump landing at the base of the ramp, go off the ramp collecting the 9 second boost in the volcano. Take the slight right and hydro jump again as the room opens up, being sure to remain low enough to exit the room underneath the skull.

As you leave the skull begin hydro jump chaining again and carry the chain to the finish

## Arctic Circle

On the left side after the first corner, there are some buildings, one of them is sunk into the ground creating a ramp that you can use to take a shortcut which is significantly faster than taking the intended way around.

This shortcut can be made even faster with a very precise pair of hydro jumps. If you can hydro jump and land just after the hitbox of the roof ends, there is a speed surface allowing you to gain a significant amount of speed to take around the corner to CP2 with. This is made difficult for two reasons, the first is that the roof hitbox extends more than the graphics make it seem. Second and more importantly, you are not able to get enough height using a standard hydro jump. To gain enough height you need to jump early and land back in the water in time to perform a bounce jump, this second jump when done correctly will gain more height than a normal jump is able to get. The difficulty of this trick comes from needing to start the trick much further away than you might initially think, and land in a relatively small area to get the largest effect from the speed surface.

After CP2 you will notice a large hole in the ice when the track makes a left turn. If you hydro jump into this tunnel you can cut some of the track out as well as gain a large amount of speed from the walls and floor. Boosting into the right side of the tunnel to maintain contact with it for as long as possible will help gain the most amount of speed

Carry as much speed as possible leaving the tunnel by hydro jumping as you land in the water then turn and boost in air to adjust your momentum to fit through the small tunnel. It is possible to line up a redirect as you are leaving the large tunnel, however the timing required to have it line you up down the track to where you can fit in the small tunnel is quite difficult.

Take the following right and while crossing the 4th checkpoint, hydro jump to the large ramp with the 9 second boost then chain hydro jumps around the next corner and through the tunnel. The corner right before the 4th checkpoint can be redirected around as well, however without taking significant overspeed from the large tunnel section all the way to this point it likely isn't worth it. If you are able to maintain significant overspeed, this redirect can help keep that overspeed much further down the track. Take the sharp right just after the 5th checkpoint and then cut the next left by hydro jumping over the ice to collect the 4 second boost. Chain this jump going to the left to enter the secret area, continuing the chain through the container ship, then take the final sharp right in the water then onto the ramp to the finish.

## Medium Tracks

To unlock medium tracks you must place in third place or better in each of the easy tracks

### Greek Isles

-Greek Isles is a great track to practice maintaining overspeed while jump chaining, from CP3 to CP5 you have a long straight section where you can carry decent overspeed for the entire duration.

Starting out, you will want to get the boost start and boost to your maximum speed, performing an angle boost turning to the right, then on the second ramp do the angle boost to the left. You can use almost all of your boost so long as you don't completely run out. Done well you should be getting a low 12.xx, done really well you can even get a sub 12 CP1. Once you collect the 9 second boost you should be boosting for pretty much the entirety of the track.

Continue to the left turn, hydro jump chaining as much as possible, jump in the air around this left hand turn, boosting sharply to the left. If you can land at the base of the ramp just before CP2 without splashing in the water, land there and take the ramp, otherwise continue the jump chain through the checkpoint and into the waterfall just after CP2. Done well this sector should take 9-10 seconds, ideally putting your CP2 time under 22 seconds.

Continue through the waterfall on the left, with a precisely timed redirect, it is possible to redirect around the sharp left corner just after the waterfall, however this timing is very tight and is very risky if you miss the timing. As you approach the long right hand turn start hydro jump chaining, keeping as tight to the right hand wall as you can, be careful to not turn too far and start boosting backwards, and to avoid taking the turn so tight you hit a pillar. As you approach the large drop with the third checkpoint, shift jump hard to the right, if timed correctly you should get a redirect around the corner, depending on how much momentum you have you will need to adjust how early you need to redirect; too early and you will not fully make it around the corner while redirecting and will hit the pillar, too late and you will crash straight into the wall.

The biggest timesave for this map comes from the long and relatively straight section of track between CP3 and CP 5, maintaining as much speed as possible from the big drop right before CP3 then hydro jump chaining and landing as early as possible on the slide. Boost all the way down the slide, then immediately when you hit the water do a hydro jump. There are two ways to take this section, the first is to do a bounce jump as high as possible, this should allow you to maintain significant overspeed from the ramp, and give enough height to collect the 9 second boost. The second approach to this section is to buffer a very small splashless hydro jump, ideally you will land directly at the base of the ramp as it is coming out of the water, the timing to do this correctly is extremely tight and you can easily lose momentum by not jumping far enough and landing back in the water, or by bashing into the top half of the ramp. With either approach to this ramp section, continue jump chaining into the cave section, being careful to do splashless jumps and when necessary keeping them low to avoid hitting the ceiling.

Carry as much momentum as possible through the cave and through to CP5 by continuously hydro jumping. When entering the large room you will need to turn right but that is made more difficult when trying to maximize the speed being carried. You can achieve this right turn in two different ways. The first is to splash into the water momentarily instead of buffering hydro jumps, if you are turned to the right and jump soon after splashing you should be able to achieve the correct angle while losing minimal speed. The second way to get this momentum to the right is to hydro jump at the end of the tunnel while on the left side, with a large hydro jump you will hit the ceiling and bounce to the right while preserving the most momentum, this is more difficult as you need to be positioned correctly to even attempt this.

Just after CP5 there is a wall that has a narrow gap to get the boat through making it nearly impossible to maintain hydro jumps through it, however if your hydro jumping ability is good enough it is possible to maintain a splashless jump chain past this gap, however this is *incredibly* difficult. Just after this small gap, immediately shift jump to the right to redirect around

the left turn, started early enough, it is possible to get around this corner and do a second redirect to get around the following right turn. There is another small gap just before the final slide in the track, this gap is too low to jump chain through it, in part because the collision on the ceiling is not perfectly flat and jumping into it can sometimes cause your boat to come to a complete stop for seemingly no reason. You will need to land in the water here, drag reduction angles can be very beneficial here as this is one of the few sections of the track that you need to be in the water, and assuming you did the rest of the track well up to this point you will have decent overspeed. When you reach the end of this gap, you can shift jump down the slide and even potentially do a redirect to avoid colliding with one of the invisible walls.

## Lake Powell

Perhaps the calmest of the medium tracks, Lake Powell features many twisting turns through a cave system before opening up to a fantastic drop right before the finish line. A good LP run loses minimal speed on tight turns and executes a jump chain from the last CP to the finish line. Right around LP's first turn, you are offered a choice between a ramp with a +9 boost, or a +4 boost on the water. The ramp is the faster strat, although collecting the +4 boost loses very little time and can be easier to get a consistent time with.

After a brief straightaway, you can cut a tighter left turn by driving on the edge of the rock. Collect the +4 boost and take the ramp, turning right in the air to line you up for the next turn. After landing, prepare for a sharp left turn.

Collect the +4 boost directly ahead as you turn to the right to pass CP2. There is a short drop concealing a +4 boost from view on the right. Collect this boost and turn right into the cave. Once in the cave, take a tight right turn to collect a +9 boost. A wider turn loses time and grants only a +4 boost.

After a slight left turn and a right hairpin, a +4 boost hangs in the air. The smallest of Hydro Jumps allows you to collect this boost without having to take too wide a turn to the left after. Hug the left wall around the turn, and it's Christmas! A +9 boost and a +4 boost in the water. With a little wiggling, it is possible to collect both boosts. However, boost is abundant on this track, so it is wiser to drive a straight line and settle for the +9 only.

Directly ahead, continue through the waterfall to collect a +4 boost, followed by another left turn and right hairpin. Following this, a +4 boost is on a left-right cycle in the water. A good pace puts this boost right in your path. Collect this boost, then hug the wall for a tight left turn.

Ahead is a ramp that aims you towards a +9 boost and a +4 boost. Hydro Jump over the ramp so as not to gain too much height, as you will need to turn left followed by a right hairpin immediately upon landing.

Ahead of you is a ramp and a shiny boost. Do not be tempted! Aim left instead and jump over the docks to enter a secret tunnel with an invisible +4 boost. This dumps you out right at the last CP, where you should begin a jump chain that continues over the bridge and around the last left turn to the finish line.

Note: The top of the bridge is a speed surface that shoots you in a sharp left direction relative to the track. Clipping the top of the bridge can give you some extra speed with a minimal change in direction.

## The Far East

Start the track with a boost start and continue down the opening straight conserving boost. When the track begins to turn right, there will be a tunnel to the left of the track that you can hydro jump into. Once into the tunnel face the right wall and boost into it while performing a small hydro jump to remain airborne. The tunnel walls are speed surfaces that can give your boat a very large amount of speed. When you leave this tunnel you should have lots of speed going towards a 90 degree left corner. If you start turning right as soon as you are leaving the tunnel you should be able to redirect around the first of the two 90 degree corners then just carry as much speed as possible to CP1

Go off the ramp right after CP1 and start boosting to the left in preparation to get around the next turn. You should land in the water near the small bridge. Take the hairpin and the following two turns tight to the wall. Line yourself up with the floating +4 boost, drop down one level, then hydro jump to collect the boost and land in the center of the land above the track. If you land right at the beginning of this slide you get the largest boost of speed from the speed surface. Take the slide around the right corner and begin a hydro jump chain down this small straight, being careful to be low enough to make it under the wall at the end of the straight. Land in the water and line yourself up for the following straight. You can chain jumps down this straight too, but be sure to not hit the bottom of the building you are supposed to go under.

Take the left corner tight and you are now on the last stretch before the finish. Hydro jump over the small island in the center of the track for a hidden boost, then just continue down the straight to the end, taking the ramp over collecting the +9 boost and being sure to save enough boost to do a hydro jump or two when you land to keep overspeed.

## Hard Tracks

To unlock the hard tracks you must place second place or better in each of the medium tracks

### Ship Graveyard

Ashes to ashes, boats to barnacles. With more than a few problem areas that threaten to wreck your ship, Ship Graveyard is all about executing Hydro Jumps in tight spaces.

After the first turn left, you are presented with an option. You can either dodge between the two ships on the left to collect a +9 boost, or drive straight forward to collect a +4 boost. Personally, I (inphlox) prefer collecting the +9 boost, as I believe the extra boost proves very valuable around the few tight turns and the jump chain ahead. However, with perfect play, collecting the +4 boost on a tighter line could save up to a quarter second. Player's choice.

A tight right, a left with a +4 boost, and another left brings you to a straightaway with a ramp facing towards an outcropping of rocks. Begin a jump chain before the ramp to collect the +4 boost and boost left. The goal is to avoid hitting the wall on the left, but to boost far enough that you clear the outcropping of rocks ahead. Continue the jump chain turning right to swoop around the rocks and enter the waterfall secret.

After a right turn, take the ramp to collect a +4 boost and immediately turn left. A short distance ahead is an archway with a cute spooky house on top. Hug closely the right wall and Hydro Jump to clear the archway without crashing into the house. This grants an invisible +9 boost. Then continue a jump chain through the straightaway, being sure not to crash into the random hanging pipe above. Before the track drops, land from your jump chain in the middle of the track. If performed correctly, your overspeed should carry you into the +9 boost ahead.

A left turn and a right turn bring you to a straightaway with a moving +4 boost and myriad scrapped vehicles. Drive straight down the middle of the track to collect the +4 boost, beginning a jump chain right after you do. Avoid hitting any stray propellers or plane tails, as these will send you into freefall.

If you are low on boost, splash slightly in the water to gain extra height and collect the +4 boost hanging above the large drop. If your boost meter is still in the yellow, then feel free to retain your speed and skip this boost. Either way, boost left as you descend to continue on the regular track. Do not take the waterfall secret, as this is a couple of seconds slower.

Your next left turn is around a large rock formation. If you crash into the rocks around the midway point of the turn, the game will redirect you the rest of the way past the turn, which is fast. Alternatively, avoiding the rocks and taking the turn a little wider without a redirect is only slightly slower.

If you can take the ramp or jump to collect the next +4 boost, great. But don't count on it, depending on how the game redirects you or the waves batter you. Be careful around the rocks on your next right turn, as there are some partially submerged boulders that can crash you into freefall.

On your left is a crashed ship with a boulder at its stern (back). For a simple route, drive past the boulder and turn tightly left to collect the +9 boost ahead. For an advanced route, wait until you rise to the top of these large waves and jump over the boulders and the last bit of the ship, boosting left to collect the +9 boost.

Jump to avoid being battered by the waves and to build slight overspeed with your newfound boost. Once you land, weave through the tunnel ahead, taking its last right turn tight to line up a jump to collect a hanging +4 boost. Continue the jump chain to the finish line.

## Venice Canals

Featuring many tight turns and precise jump chains, VC is not for the faint of heart.

Directly after the +4 boost at the start of the track, turn right to hop the curb and weave between the buildings instead of going around them.

Skip the first +9 boost you see upon reaching CP1, but Hydro Jump to collect the +9 boost hanging in the air just around the corner. Be sure you are aiming to the right to slide under the dock and collect the +4 boost there.

The track branches into three paths: the left with a moving +9 boost, the middle with a +4 boost, and the right with a +4 boost. Take a slight turn to the rightmost path, as it is a significantly shorter distance than the other two. At this point, you may begin a jump chain to pass CP2, continuing over the short wall. Continue the chain while you collect the +4 boost in the air after the ramp, and finally jump onto the land bar thereafter rather than driving around it.

Take a tight right and hug the buildings to line up to collect the +9 boost and CP3.

Right after CP4, the track branches again. Take the right path, not the left.

When the tunnel opens up you will see a ramp with a +4 boost straight ahead. Begin a jump chain to collect the boost and continue past the finish line.

## **N.Y. Disaster**

Did you know NYC was built on top of an active volcano? Neither did the insurance companies, but here we are. N.Y. Disaster doesn't really have too much of anything -- a few turns and a few jumps, and the easiest redirect you will ever get. A good track to practice some of the basics.

After boosting to full speed and collecting the +4 boost around the first right turn, aim between the two checkered columns ahead to enter the track's first and only secret. As you exit the secret, perform the tiniest of Hydro Jumps to collect the +9 boost above, aiming left to continue on the track.

After a right turn around some dilapidated buildings, perform a Hydro Jump before the track drops to build some overspeed. If you jump far enough, you will see that the docks that form an overhang above the upcoming tunnel have no collision. Perform a splashless jump upon landing to carry that speed into the tunnel.

After navigating through the tunnel, take the last right turn tight to line up a Hydro Jump to collect a hanging +4 boost. For a simple route, land in the water to take the next left turn, collect the moving +4 boost and launch off the ramp ahead. For a more advanced route, continue a jump chain around the left turn and either ascend the ramp or continue to chain past it if the angle is wrong. Either way, do not take the left path, as it is slower.

Chain jumps after the ramp to carry overspeed over the large drop ahead. As you drop, the track turns right, so boost in that direction. Avoid boosting too hard however, as you will run into an invisible wall. As you descend, you may turn right to trigger a redirect that can align you well for the turn ahead. This redirect is not necessary if you adjust your momentum with your boosters. I (inphlox) prefer the swaggy redirect.

Hidden behind a wall and the end of the long left turn ahead is a +4 boost. Collect this, then head right to enter the subway tunnels. For a simpler route, stay in the water. For an advanced route, once you are in the tunnel, begin a jump chain facing the left wall. When the tunnel splits into two paths, take the left path, then jump across to the right path, collecting the +9 boost sitting on the platform in the middle. The subway columns have no collision, so never fear. Perform one last jump as you land off the platform to carry your overspeed, then follow the tunnel as it winds right. When the track drops, be sure to be on the left side to collect the +4

boost that lies below. Continue to follow the tunnel as it winds left and opens up to the final straightaway.

Jump before the track drops and begin boosting towards the finish line. Be careful not to boost too far left, as you will hit an invisible wall and lose your speed. If you are low on boost, jump over the ramp to collect the +4. Otherwise, stay left for a more direct line to continue a jump chain to cross the finish line.

## Bonus Tracks

To unlock the first bonus track you must come in first place on each hard track, each bonus track after requires a first place finish in the previous track

### Catacomb

The first Bonus Track, Catacomb would be a relatively calm track if you were to stay in the water. But we are speedrunners. Most of our time on this track will be spent in the air, precisely weaving through pillars and around sharp corners.

As with any 3-lap track, the order in which you collect boosts is subjective, and as long as you avoid maxing out the boost bar it shouldn't matter which boosts you collect on which lap.

At the start of the track, you can collect the +4 boost or save it for a future lap. On the wall on the left you will see a circular patch of light rock. Line up just to the left of this patch and perform a Hydro Jump to cut some track off of the first left turn. Continue boosting to the left to weave between the two pillars ahead, which will grant you an invisible +9 boost. Continue the jump chain facing the left through the rest of the cavern. There are two +4 boosts which you will want to collect, but I advise you don't try to collect them on the same lap.

If you hit the ceiling as you exit the cavern, it will force you down to the water without costing you too much speed. This can help line you up for the tight left turn to follow.

After the turn, there is a ramp aiming towards two +4 boosts and a right turn following. Aim right as you exit the ramp, but do not boost too hard to the right initially, as there is an invisible wall that keeps you from cutting too much of the turn.

Once you land, there is a +4 boost to the wide right, and another +4 boost around the turn. You will want to collect both of these boosts at some point.

Ahead there is an opening through an arch over a rock shelf. Hydro Jump to cut through and collect an invisible +4 boost, aiming left to continue on the track.

At this point, you will see another shiny +9 boost in the water on the left. Do not collect this boost ever, as it is too far out of the way. Instead, perform a Hydro Jump aiming between the sunken ship and the waterfall on the right. There lies a +9 boost for you to collect. Perform another jump to continue left around the last corner.

Attention: around the last corner is another +9 boost. This is where you are at most risk of maxing out your boost bar, so structure your boost patterns around this section in particular. It is

possible to collect both boosts if your gauge is low enough, or you may dodge the first +9 boost by hugging the waterfall close. You may also skip the second +9 boost by taking a slightly wider turn. You may need to adapt on the fly, so “keep your eyes open.”

Around the last corner is a ramp that aims you directly at the goal post. If you turn your boat as you are grinding up the ramp, you can get enough height and speed to clear the goal post and avoid crashing into freefall. This is ideal, as it allows you to boost for further overspeed and continue a jump chain around the corner as you did Lap 1. Crashing into the goal post loses some time, but is still preferable to driving in the water.

## Castle Von Dandy

Fun fact: the paintings in Castle Von Dandy are photoshopped portraits of some of the game’s developers. CVD has some satisfying straightaways for jump chains and an absolute monster of a sharp turn through the castle. While boost is not in over abundance, the boosts are grouped close together, so take care to avoid the max of shame.

After a couple of gentle turns, a belltower stands before you with a sharp left turn afterwards. The tower’s left path is fastest and gives a +4 boost. On the third lap when your boost is low however, you can Hydro Jump through the bell to obtain a secret +9 boost.

Take the ramp to begin a jump chain over the graveyard, collecting an invisible +9 boost resting over one of the headstones. Continue the chain until you reach the castle.

The castle is comprised of a long and sharp left turn with a +9 boost around the last section. This +9 boost is best left for Lap 2. Turn right to exit the castle, then take a tight left around the next corner to line up with a ramp that gives another +9 boost. Continue a jump chain from this ramp down the straightaway for Laps 2 and 3.

There is a secret path you can reach by jumping through the windows in the castle. This path might be faster if reached with a redirect, but I (inphlox) am still testing the possibilities.

## Hydro Speedway

So you want to run Hydro Speedway. You like running out of boost just before the last turn of the track? You want a three-lap track without any artful scenery to distract you? A five-hour grind to shave a tenth of a second off your PB is your idea of a good time? Hey, I’m not judging. Here’s what you need to know.

This track starts with a jump chain. As soon as you get your boost start, hold down the boost button and angle yourself slightly towards the right wall. As soon as your boost activates and you reach full speed, perform a Hydro Jump and tilt your control stick to the right to cut the turn tight and align yourself to collect a +4 boost as you perform a second Hydro Jump.

An optional advanced strategy is to achieve a redirect to carry your overspeed around the upcoming turn. To accomplish this, begin turning right prior to performing your second hydro jump, then hold right and cease boosting. You might need to perform a third Hydro Jump if the redirect does not trigger quickly enough. If performed correctly, the game will redirect you

around the corner. Don't count on getting the +9 boost if the redirect is late. Doing this saves about a half second per lap.

After you land from the jump chain, turn right and collect the +9 boost. Shortly ahead there is a 90° left turn whose right wall consists of red sections with various diagonal angles. Instead of trying to cut this turn tight, it is faster to face your boat left as you boost into either the last red angled section of the wall or the white angled section right before it. This cancels your forward momentum without wasting precious boost and bumps you in the correct direction without losing too much speed.

After two right turns with a +4 boost in between, the track splits in two. There is a +4 boost in the air which you can collect by driving under on any lap. Both paths sport a ramp with a +4 boost directly before it. The right path is a slightly more direct line, so take the right path on two laps and the left path on one.

As you go up the ramp on the right path, turn your control stick to the right to gain extra speed. (Likewise, on the left path, tilt your control stick left. Beware a sneaky invisible wall that can eat your speed if you exit the ramp too far to the right/left.) Once you exit the ramp, immediately face your boat forward again to land in the middle of the land bar and slide to the end of it. Be sure to boost enough to have good speed as you slide, but don't waste more boost than necessary, as the land bar will conserve your momentum without you needing to continually boost.

After one last right hairpin, you will see the Finish Line. On the left is a ramp with a +4 boost. On the right, just past the Finish Line, is a Banshee float in the air, inside which is an invisible +9 boost. Do not take the ramp, as it will only slam you into the goal post. Instead, start a jump chain as soon as your boat is back up to full speed. With the correct angle, you can collect both the +4 and the +9 boost in the same lap, or you can collect them on two different laps.

Continue the jump chain around the first bend, just as you did at the start of the race. If at all possible, avoid bumping into the walls of the track. A bump reduces your speed and can cost as much as a full second, which is more than you have to spare on this track. Congratulations! Two more laps of the same and you can put HS in the rear view.

## **Nile Adventure**

The longest track in Hydro Thunder, Nile Adventure is a fantastic and perilous journey that features a smattering of every speedrunning technique.

Once you boost up to full speed at the start, maintain a conservative tap boost until you reach the first ramp. Full boost as you enter and ascend the ramp, turning left as you do. As always, be sure not to run out of boost completely so that once you collect the +9 boost, you can continue to immediately boost left. If performed correctly, you will have enough height to clear the rocks on the left.

Once you land, you are confronted by a hairpin right turn followed shortly afterward with a 90 degree left turn. Take these as tightly as possible, and spare not the boost!

Ahead is a dropoff and a +4 boost floating in the air. Full boost as you fall from the drop and perform a Hydro Jump to build slight overspeed and collect the +4 boost.

After you enter the pyramid, there is a left turn, right turn with a +4 boost, and another right turn. Each of these include a drop in elevation, so be sure to adjust your angle early to avoid drifting too wide in the air.

Another left turn brings you to a straightaway and a moving +4 boost, followed by another dropoff. Full boost off the drop close to the middle of the track. Once you land, you will see three windows above the track. Splash briefly in the water before performing a jump to fly through the middle window and collect a hidden +9 boost. If you land on the grey stone between the columns before the darker ramp up, you will gain significant overspeed.

As you fly through the air and listen to the announcer struggle to keep up with your place number, try to stay in the middle of the track to collect a +4 boost below. As you continue down a dark slide, turn left so that when you exit the ramp, you are nearly perpendicular to the track. Prepare to perform a splashless Hydro Jump while continuously holding left. If performed correctly, the game should redirect you through the mouth of the snake and around the first turn thereof, saving a good second or two.

As an alternative to the above redirect, you may hit the right wall of the slide and exit facing straight forward. This should line you up to perform a small Hydro Jump to carry your overspeed into the mouth of the snake. Try to avoid the invisible hitboxes lining the snake's mouth. If performed well, this is only about a second slower.

After navigating through the snake's innards and collecting the moving +4 boost, you are met with another +4 boost and a drop, with a carving of a sphinx in the wall ahead. Hydro Jump to pass through the sphinx and turn slightly left in the air to line yourself up with the track. Perform a splashless Hydro Jump to carry your overspeed a little farther until you crash into a wall. Upon landing from your jumps, turn a tight right to collect a +4 boost. A long left turn ahead is lined with broken columns that will eat your speed should you collide with them. The broken column at the end of the turn is slightly longer than the rest, and behind it is another +4 boost to collect. Then jump to collect a +9 boost in the air and clear the fallen sarcophagus.

Do not go in the window that opens towards a secret that is slower than the regular course. It may be possible to save time in this section by grinding a speed surface on the walls like in the PS1 runs, but it is not yet determined whether this saves any time on N64.

After you land, zag around a corner and hope that the guillotines do not chop you into the air. Jump before the drop to barely clear the ramp that lies before an airborne +4 boost. Jump again to collect the boost and build overspeed.

Hug the right wall of the triangular tunnel and you can mostly drive straight through the tunnel's first zag. Then a tight right and a tight left to collect a +9 boost.

Jump before the drop to initiate an extended jump chain through the next section. Upon landing, perform a few small jumps to carry the overspeed without bonking too hard on the roof. When the track opens up again, continue the chain in a straight line over the middle of the eye-shaped platforms to collect three hidden +4 boosts and potentially a moving +9 boost, if the cycle lines up. Continue the jump chain until you crash into the wall and the end of the straightaway, facing left to maintain some momentum.

Another right turn, a +4 boost, and a left turn bring you to the top of your climb. Buckle up, Spanky, this one's gonna hurt. Collect the +4 boost ahead and either jump or fall off the drop to begin a jump chain.

Beneath the water is a mutant cyclops stick bug whose arms have no hitboxes. As you drive past, it sticks its eye up to say hello. Be sure not to crash into it as you collect the +9 boost that hangs overhead.

Just ahead, archways frame a slight right turn that leads to the final straightaway. The ideal run continues a chain through this turn and on to the finish line, however the line is very tight. A more consistent strategy is to land in the water to navigate the tighter spaces of the turn, then resuming a jump chain as soon as possible to reach the finish line. You've earned it.

## **Boat Specifics**

Most boats aren't used at all for competitive times, currently just 2 boats have WR runs and one of them only is used on one track.

### **Easy Boats**

Easy boats are unlocked from the start

#### **Damn the Torpedoes**

#### **Midway**

#### **Miss Behave**

fastest of the Easy boats

### **Medium Boats**

Medium boats are unlocked when all easy tracks have been completed placing third or better

## **Banshee**

Fastest of the Medium boats

## **Tidal Blade**

## **Thresher**

This boat can carry overspeed in the water remarkably well, this can be useful on tracks like The Far East where you can gain significant overspeed in the tunnel, then need to take as much speed around two 90 degree turns that are too close together to be able to redirect around both with good overspeed. Thresher also has decent in-air control, however is not as good as boats like the Blowfish or Cutthroat.

## **Hard Boats**

Hard boats are unlocked when all medium tracks have been completed in second place or better

## **Cutthroat**

The Cutthroat is very light and has incredibly good in-air turning, however it does have a tendency to start tumbling in the air. When doing a bounce jump Cutthroat can gain incredible height, far more than any of the other boats. Cutthroat's in-air control makes it really good at navigating corners while jump chaining. Shows potential for some pretty good times on tracks with minimal water driving, but its instability can make running this boat quite difficult.

## **Rad Hazard**

Fastest of the Hard boats

The Rad Hazard has a slower base and boost speed than the Blowfish, but its streamlined design gives it a remarkable air speed advantage. On certain tracks where the Rad Hazard can gain overspeed and continue in a straight line, it can gain seconds over the Blowfish.

This is the old WR boat for Greek Isles, primarily due to the large sections you can carry significant overspeed

## Razorback

Razorback has a very high boost speed while in the water, but is difficult to control as the boat wants to sway back and forth and does not want to go in a straight line. This boat may have some potential for decent times, however it will likely never compete with many of the other boats.

## Bonus Boats

Bonus boats are unlocked when the bonus track in the corresponding track has been completed in first place

## Tinytanic

One of the stranger boats on the roster. Tinytanic has some *insane* potential on some tracks, but is a pretty situational boat. When turning as Tinytanic the back of the boat swings a very large amount, making this boat *extremely* good at shift jumping. This boat has some massive potential to get fast times on a handful of tracks, namely Greek Isles, Hydro Speedway, and Castle Von Dandy. To gain the most from this boat you will need to shift jump as often as possible. This is achieved by traveling sideways down much of the track so that when you shift it adds to your forward momentum and not to the side, when you need to turn the opposite direction you can turn even sharper in the original direction to initiate a redirect which is faster than trying to straighten out.

## Armed Response

Similar to Thresher, Armed Response sheds overspeed while in the water much slower than other boats, allowing you to carry overspeed when cornering in the water much better than many boats on the roster. Unlike Thresher, Armed Response does not have good in-air control, making it hard to make the most of this strength.

## Blowfish

Has the most in air control with a high boost speed, making it the best boat for building overspeed with continuous Hydro Jumps and carrying overspeed around corners.

WR boat for nearly all maps

## Chumdinger

You have a dog that barks at your opponents, what more could you ask for?