

Hut Stream v5a3IV**

Wilberforce Valley, Canterbury

Map: BV19 Lake Kaniere

Highest Waterfall: 90m

Minimum Rope: 2 x 60m

Anchors: Bolts

Length: 600m

Drop: 350m

Rock type: Greywacke

Catchment: 3km²

Flood Danger: high-extreme

Recommended season: Late summer

Approach: 2.5 – 3hours

Descent: 3 – 5hours

Return: 0.5 – 1 hour

Total: 6 – 9 hours

Draft CanyonTopo by Tom Johns

Important!

Although Hut Stream is on DOC land the access is across working stations, unless permission is given then you cannot access this canyon. Before you head up the valley call Algidus Station on (03) 318 5846 and ask, they are happy for people to walk across their land but they like to know who's up there.

Approach by car:

Approaching from Christchurch drive towards Windwhistle. Once at Windwhistle follow signs to Olympus Ski field taking Coleridge Road. At Dog Box corner turn onto Homestead Road and follow this and signs to Glenthorne Station. Turn left onto Harper Road and keep going until you reach the group of houses and the canal (past the Olympus turnoff).

Permission to use the Glenthorne Station track can be granted and a key hired by calling the Station Manager (03 3185822) If you have been granted access to use the Glenthorne Station track then you'll have directions, if not then turn right after the first canal bridge and follow the road around the river bed until you get to the Wilberforce Canal, following the track past the intake gets you out and into the riverbed. From here it's all wheel marks and rough tracks up the Wilberforce until your destination is reached.

Because there are working stations on either bank of the river it is important to stay in the Riverbed unless you have received permission to use the station tracks.

At the time of writing (Feb 2017) the best place to park is at the west end of the Fanghill Flat around 66'2, 22'8.

If you have a vehicle capable then crossing the river is an option, but be wary, as it is a long walk out if you get swamped or stuck.

Approach on Foot:

Crossing the Wilberforce. Pick a spot where the river is braided and be careful, it is worth walking to where the river has multiple channels. This should not be attempted by people inexperienced in river crossing and use of river crossing techniques are advised, once across the river walk towards Moa Hut.

Crossing the river above 280 cumecs (fighting hill readings) would be very hazardous even for experienced river crossers. It is worth noting that the Wilberforce has a long history of drowning people and vehicles and demands respect and care at all flows.

From the Moa hut there are a number of options. The first descent team went straight up behind the hut to around 940m and then sidled and climbed up a ridge to the small saddle behind the 1029 spot height. From the saddle sidle and descend towards the small basin aiming for where the 960m contour intersects the stream.

Other options possibly exist to tackle the face behind the hut and it is possible that all of them are bad, but either way the best access to the canyon is via the small saddle behind the spot height.



Route Description:

Before R1 is a deep pool with a weeping wall, which provides good jumps and slides to 4m.

R1 is a two-tier fall. Make sure you bring all of your gear with you.

After the downclimb after R2 should be spotted. R's 4,5 & 6 are a continuous sequence so the lunch rock is warm and a good spot to organize rope and assess your life choices before you begin.

Beside R4 is a beautiful pothole that can be jumped before climbing back to the R4 anchor. It is essential that the anchors for R5 are found before you get off the rope from R4, the pool has a small pour over and the flow might not sweep you away, but a slip getting to the anchors would be fatal. The R5 anchor is a hanging station and keeps you away from most of the flow. It is a rope stretcher to the R6 anchors so tie a knot in your rope! The R6 anchors are under a roof system on the TR.

R7 requires you to cross a small pool whilst being pummeled by the waterfall above a pour over to get to the anchors for R8 on the TR.

Water level:

The Wilberforce River provides the best gauge of water levels. If you can't cross the river then the canyon probably won't go (you'll be on the wrong bank). The first decent was done when the Rakaia was reading 176 cumecs.

For water levels use (<https://www.ecan.govt.nz/data/riverflow/sitedetails/168526>). The canyon has a similar catchment to Takahe Stream which was descended at 280 cumecs.

Escapes:

Due to human error it was discovered that the canyon can be escaped below R1 by climbing the bush and trees on the TL. There is also a potential exit to the TR above R4.

First descent: Kieran Chandler, Tom Johns, John Harris 25-2-2017

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