

West Akatarawa Valley Canyons



By Fergus Bramley



LITTLE AKATARAWA

River

v3a2II★

Location

Akatarawa Forest, Upper Hutt

Character

Low volume easy access canyon close to central Wellington. Beautiful enclosed sections and fun small jumps.

Map

BP32 Paraparaumu

Akatarawa and its first tributary. At around the 250m contour a benched sidle track is reached. Turn left and follow this upstream. After approximately 700 m there is an obvious downclimb of about 2m. After climbing down immediately turn left down a small shingle slope to the stream.

Rock

Greywacke

Water

Low flow in normal conditions.

Catchment

2.5 km²

Anchors

Natural anchors, both trees and logs.

Gear

2x40m ropes.

Route Description

The canyon has three distinct sections separated by short sections of walking. The first section is notable for its two enjoyable small jumps. The second section is the most enclosed section of canyon as between rappels 2 and 4 there are no escapes. The rappels in this section are scenic and take lines straight through the flow. The third section has more fun small jumps and downclimbs. The second downclimb of this section may become difficult in high flows. After this section 300m of walking takes you to the West Akatarawa River and a short return walk to the car.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	30min
Canyon descent	2-3hr
Return to Vehicle	5min
Total	2.5-3hr

Flash Flood Danger

Low to Moderate

Escapes

There are escapes on either side between the three enclosed sections.

Notes

First descent: Fergus Bramley 7/11/17

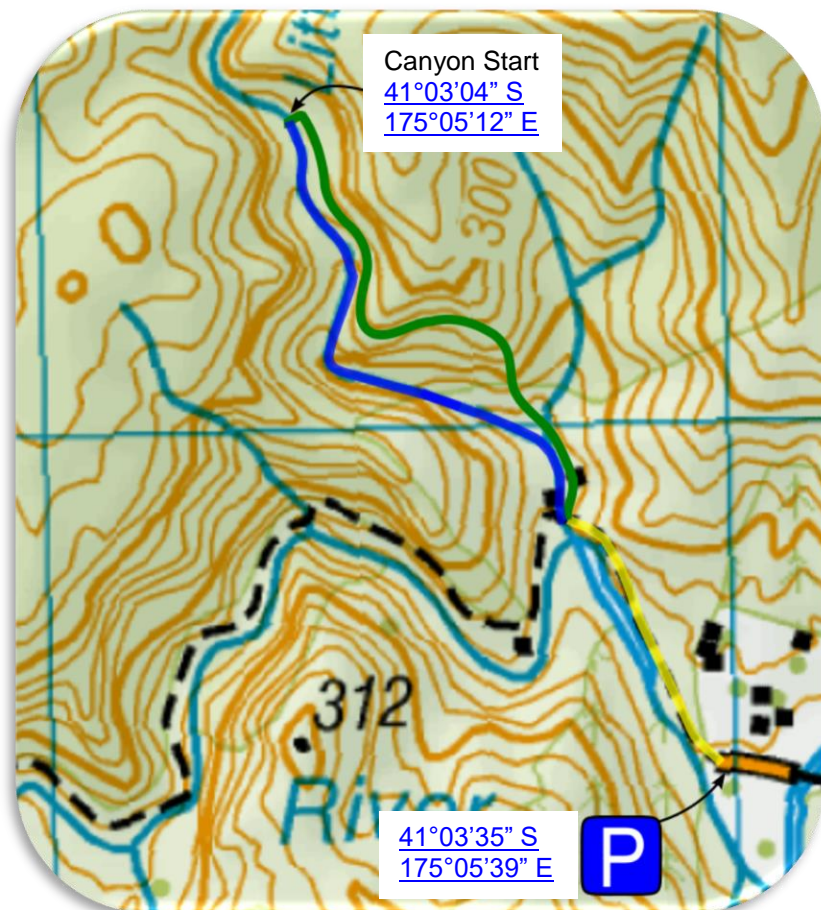
Fun to effort ratio: $(2+2)/0.5=8$

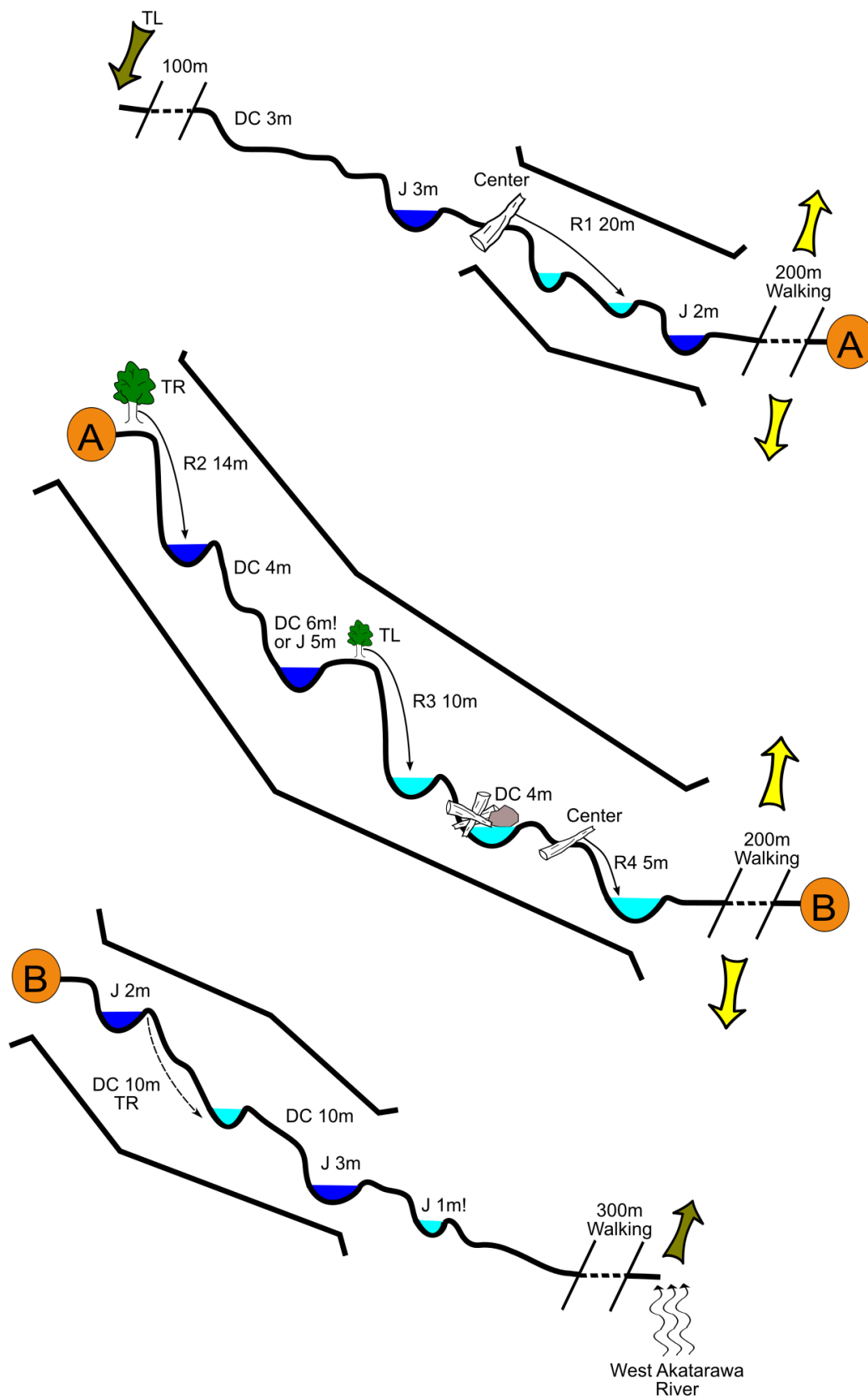
Approach by Car

Heading north on SH2 in Upper Hutt turn left into Akatarawa Road. After 6km turn left into Karapoti Road. Park at the end of Karapoti Road.

Approach on Foot

Follow the main track up the gorge for 300m. Just before you cross the Little Akatarawa River turn right onto a small track. Follow this track past a clearing with old fire and chimney. Continue on this small track as it climbs steeply up the ridge between the Little





LITTLE AKATARAWA

River

v3a2II★

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org



LITTLE AKATARAWA

River

v3a2II★

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org



WONDERWALL

Canyon v3a2III★

Location

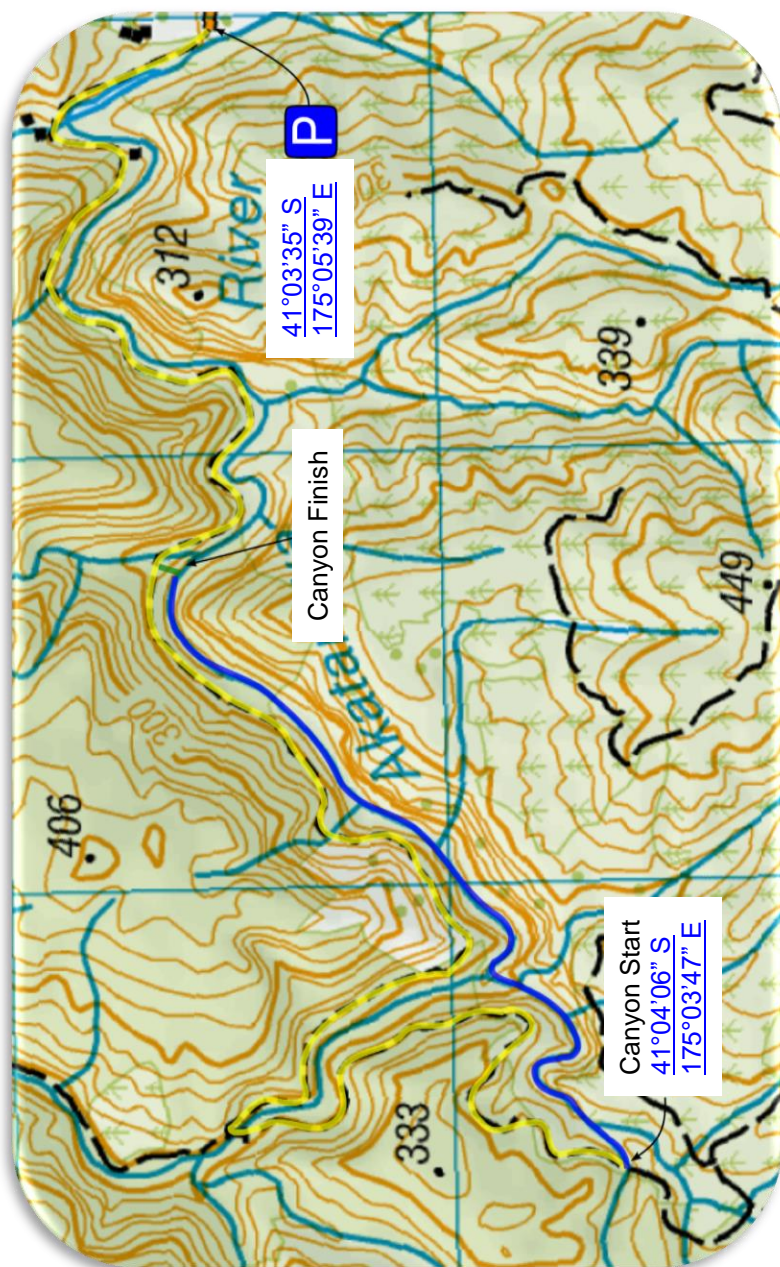
Akatarawa Forest, Upper Hutt

Character

Low to medium volume canyon with a good variety of features close to Wellington. The canyon finishes with a scramble down the West Akatarawa River.

Map

BP32 Paraparaumu



Approach by Car

Heading north on SH2 in Upper Hutt turn left into Akatarawa Road. After 6km turn left into Karapoti Road. Park at the end of Karapoti Road.

Approach on Foot

Follow the main track up the Karapoti Gorge to McGhees bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the gravel road to a culvert at location [41°04'06\"/>](#)

Rock

Greywacke

Water

The main canyon is low to medium flow in normal conditions. West Akatarawa River is high flow in normal conditions.

Catchment

Main canyon: 5.1 km²

West Akatarawa River: 40 km²

Anchors

Natural anchors: trees and rock projections.

Gear

2x40m ropes.

Route Description

The initial section along the tributary stream is mainly easy walking with some small downclimbs. The middle canyon section has great quality rock and enjoyable aquatic features with deep pools. Below this there is around 200m of walking to the last rappel. Climb up on the true left to find an anchor to protect the traverse across the top of the fall to the main pitch anchor. From the pool it is a short walk to the junction with the West Akatarawa River. After 1.25 km of floating, walking and jumps look out for the main track on the true left.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	1hr 30min
Canyon descent	3hr
Return to Vehicle	30min
Total	5hr 30min

Flash Flood Danger

Low to Moderate

Escapes

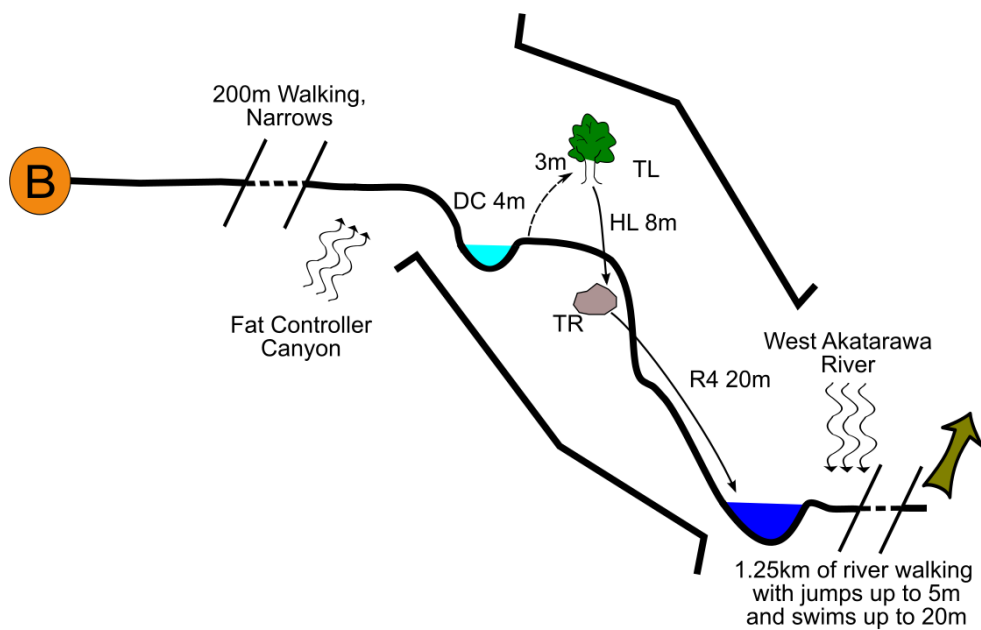
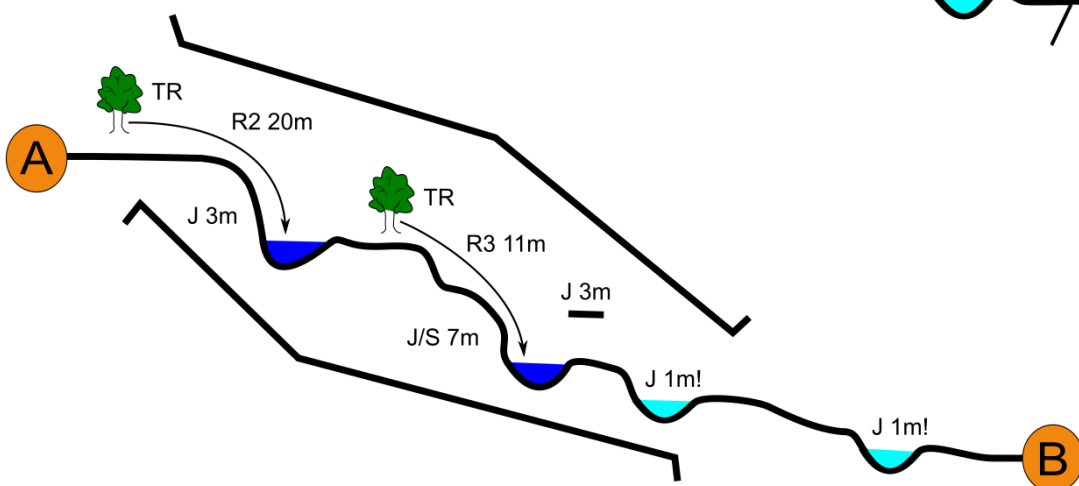
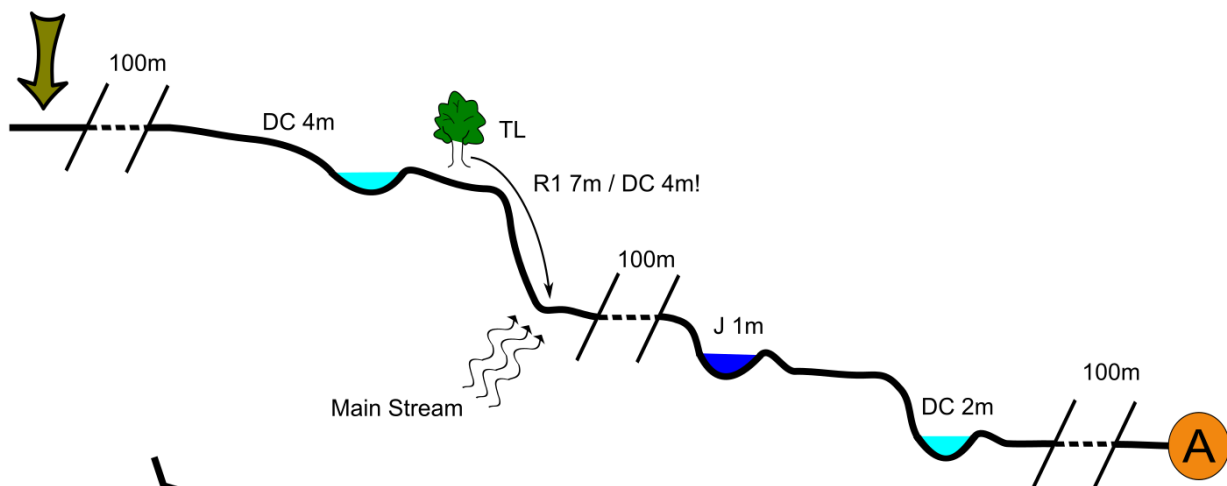
There are escapes on both sides the majority of the canyon. The West Akatarawa River has steep escapes on both sides.

Notes

First descent: Fergus Bramley, Al Bramley, Thomas Kay 20/01/18

Fun to effort ratio: (3+3)/2=3

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org



WONDERWALL

Canyon v3a2III ★

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org





FAT CONTROLLER

canyon v3a2III★

Location

Akatarawa Forest, Upper Hutt

Character

Low volume canyon with beautiful rappels close to Wellington. This canyon flows into Wonderwall canyon and finishes with a walk down the West Akatarawa River where there are a number of jumps and swims.

Map

BP32 Paraparaumu

Approach by Car

Heading north on SH2 in Upper Hutt turn left into Akatarawa Road. After 6km turn left into Karapoti Road. Park at the end of Karapoti Road.

Approach on Foot

Follow the main track up the Karapoti Gorge to McGhees bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the gravel road to the next junction. At this junction turn left and then turn left again after 50m. Continue on this road past an open area where turns into a 4WD track. After crossing a small stream the 4WD track begins to climb steeply. Begin climbing but when the track turns hard right up the ridgeline, turn left and bash down to the stream at location [41°04'01" S 175°04'10" E](#).

Rock

Greywacke

Water

Steep part of the canyon is low flow in normal conditions. West Akatarawa River is high flow in normal conditions.

Catchment

Upper Part: 0.55 km²

Wonderwall Section: 5.1 km²

West Akatarawa River: 40 km²

Anchors

Natural anchors: trees, logs and rock projections.

Gear

1x40m, 1x60m ropes.

Route Description

The first two rappels are easy cascading waterfalls surrounded by beech forest. After these there is a short section of downclimbing with one small rappel. This

small rappel is immediately before the stream enters Wonderwall Canyon. Wonderwall canyon is entered one downclimb before the final waterfall. For this waterfall climb up on the true left to find an anchor to protect the traverse across the top of the fall to the main pitch anchor. From the pool it is a short walk to the junction with the West Akatarawa River. After 1.25 km of floating, walking and some small jumps look out for the main track on the true left.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	2hr
Canyon descent	3hr
Return to Vehicle	30min
Total	5hr 30min

Flash Flood Danger

Low to Moderate

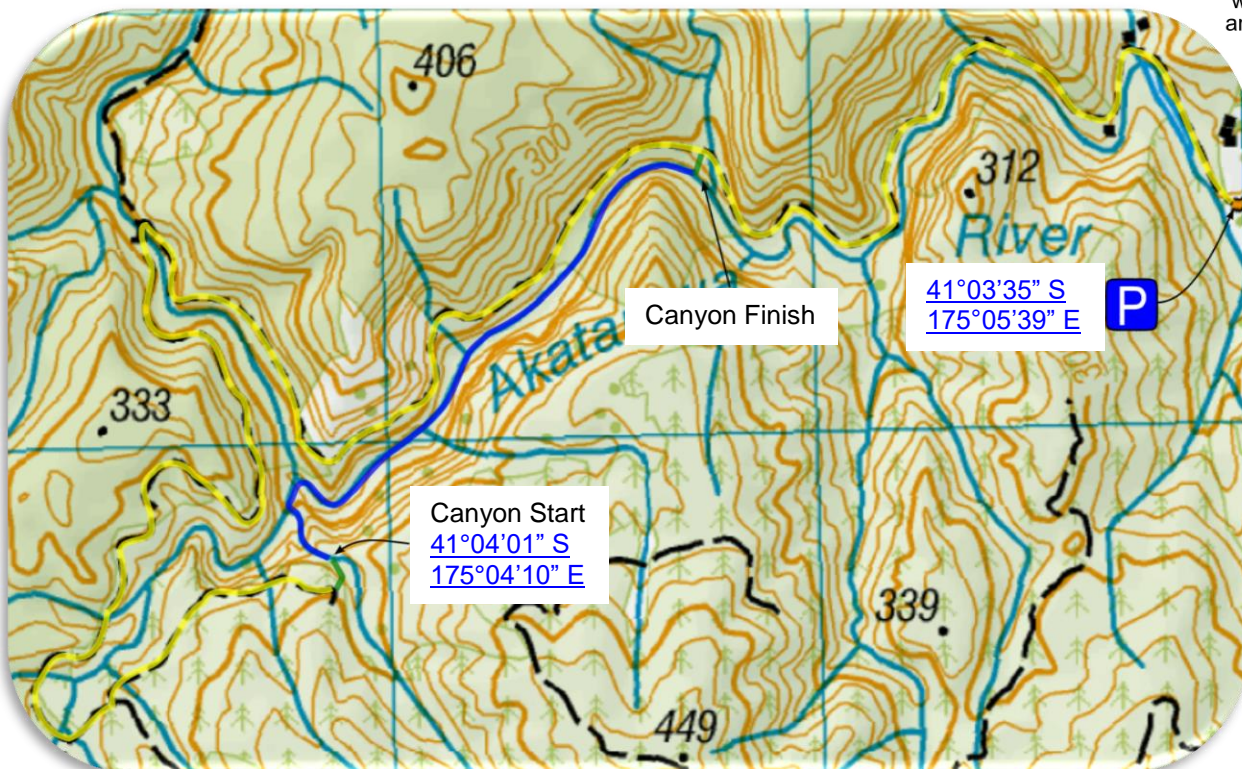
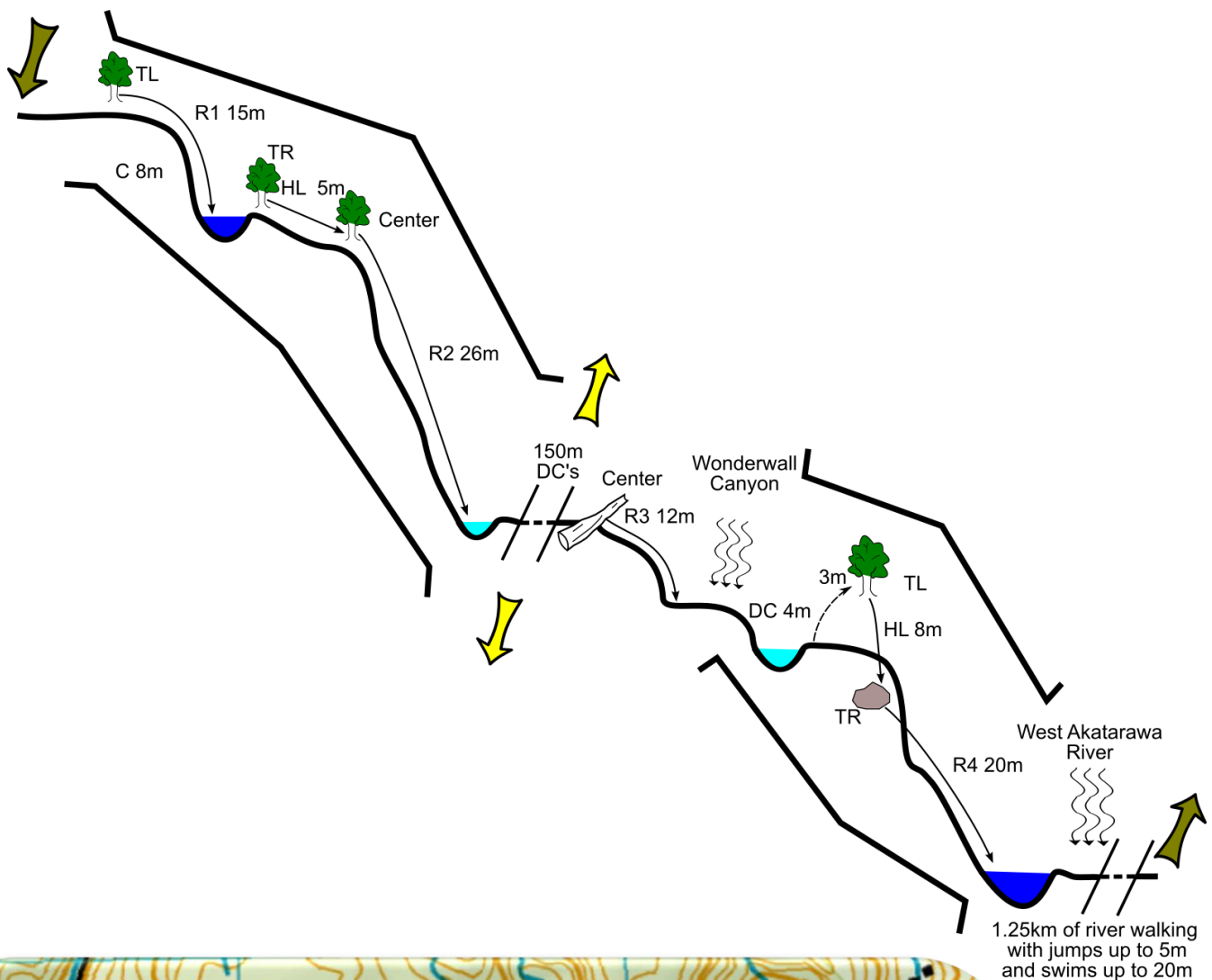
Escapes

There are escapes on either side in the section around R3. The West Akatarawa River has steep escapes on both sides.

Notes

First descent: Fergus Bramley, Al Bramley 25/02/17

Fun to effort ratio: $(3+2)/2.5=2$



FAT CONTROLLER

canyon v3a2III ★

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org





FRICITION FACTORY

canyon v4a2III★

Location

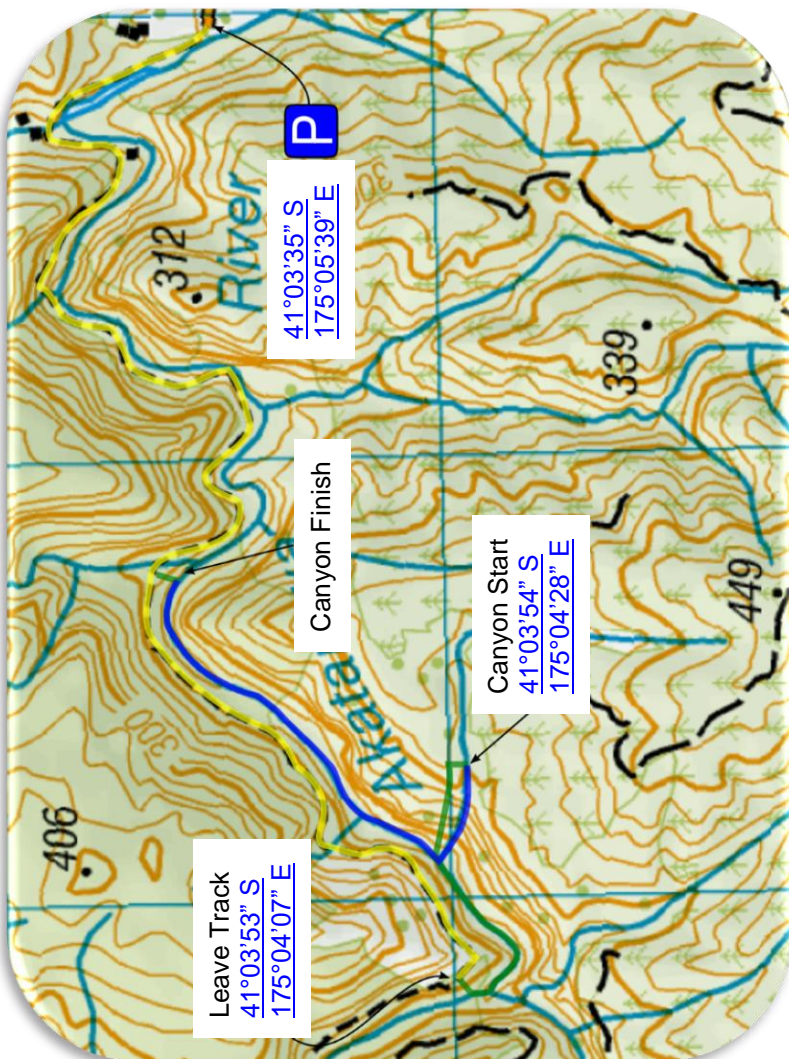
Akatarawa Forest, Upper Hutt

Character

Low volume canyon with beautiful and large rappels close to Wellington. As with others in the valley this canyon finishes with a walk down the West Akatarawa River where there are a number of jumps and swims. Due to its low volume this canyon is best done early in the season or in the days following rainfall.

Map

BP32 Paraparaumu



Approach by Car

Heading north on SH2 in Upper Hutt turn left into Akatarawa Road. After 6km turn left into Karapoti Road. Park at the end of Karapoti Road.

Approach on Foot

This canyon is the most challenging to access of those in the valley. Follow the main track up the Karapoti Gorge to a significant corner 700 m before McGhees Bridge at location [41°03'54" S 175°04'10" E](#). Just beyond this corner head off the track down steep scree to the river. Follow the river downstream to the outlet of the Friction Factory Stream at location [41°03'52" S 175°04'19" E](#). From here head up the TR of the stream picking up a small ridge and climbing all the way to the plateau. At the plateau the thickness of the bush increases and dropping into the stream is a short bash to location [41°03'54" S 175°04'28" E](#).

Rock

Greywacke

Water

Low flow in normal conditions. The level can be checked by looking at the waterfalls across the valley on the walk up the main track. West Akatarawa River is high flow in normal conditions.

Catchment

Friction Factory Canyon: 0.34 km²

West Akatarawa River: 40 km²

Anchors

Natural anchors: Trees.

Gear

1x40m, 1x60m ropes.

Route Description

The canyon starts with two short downclimbs before a side-stream on the true left doubles the flow. Soon after this is the first large pitch, a beautiful 31m cascade. Note that the anchor used for the first descent resulted in a very high friction pull down so it is worth considering the options. Between pitches one and two there are potential steep escapes on both sides. Beyond a small logjam are pitches two and three which are the same waterfall. R2 descends a slippery cascade to a tree anchor on the true right at the lip of the largest pitch R3. This is an excellent 43m pitch with views over the valley. From here is a short section of downclimbing to the West Akatarawa.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	2hr
Canyon descent	3hr
Return to Vehicle	30min
Total	5hr 30min

Flash Flood Danger

Low

Topo by Fergus Bramley
www.KiwiCanyons.org

Escapes

There are potential steep escapes between R1 and R2. The West Akatarawa River has steep escapes on both sides.

Notes

First descent: Fergus Bramley, Thomas Kay 11/03/18

Fun to effort ratio: $(3+2)/2.5=2$

