



BIRDCAGE CANYON

canyon v4a3III ★★

Location

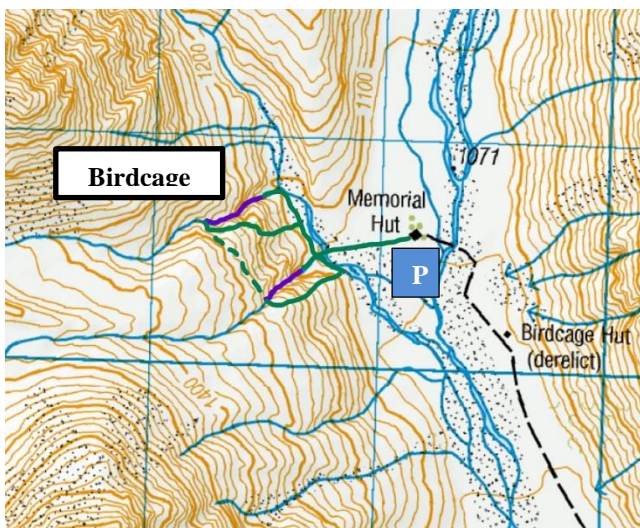
Cass Valley; overlooking Memorial Hut and the confluence Ailsa Stream and the Cass River.

Character

An exciting aquatic canyon in an alpine environment with the comfort of a hut and all you have driven in by 4wd at arm's reach. Great when combined with Memorial Canyon.

Map

BX16 Mount Elie De Beaumont.



Approach by Car

From Tekapo, drive South and soon take the right turn off for St John Observatory. Go past the observatory onto the gravel road and after a while turn left into Glenmore Station. **Note Glenmore Station, the huts and canyons are on private property; phone Emily & Will on 03 680 6752 early for access permission. From the station farmhouse access by vehicle is by high clearance 4wd and includes several crossings of the Cass river.** From the station drive approximately 25km up the Cass valley parking by the front door of Memorial Hut. Tekapo to Memorial Hut 2.5 hours.

Approach on Foot

From the hut head East towards the small water course between the 2 canyons. Weave your way up the hill around small bluffs, starting the ascent at NZTM2000 1388647E 5160610N and sidling into the canyon at NZTM2000 1388299E 5160639N. 45 minutes.

Rock

Greywacke, generally good quality where water worn.

Water

Moderate flow in normal conditions mid-summer. See picture for normal flow at confluence of canyon and Ailsa Stream. During exploration it was noted that the flow was highest 24 to 48 hours after rainfall; possibly due to the catchment length and size holding and slowly releasing water.

Catchment

6 km²

Anchors

Generally Double Bolt & Single Bolt Anchors.

Gear

Longest drop 45m (Use 50m for safe retrieval)

Route Description

The canyon starts quite abruptly at the 1250m contour where the stream enters a gorge. Soon R1 (5m) is accessed by a handline from a SBA on the TR – climbing round a corner to a SBA also on the TR. This could be scouted for a jump J! Note the pool after R1 flushes over the R2 'Ducks Back' waterfall. R2 (45m) DBA TR is two falls completed in one rappel. The first fall drops into a boiling cauldron – stay to the TR to avoid potential water hazard and stay on rope for the pour over. In high flow conditions there two redirects on the TR to avoid all flow, however beware of sharp edges and loose rocks using these!!

Two minutes downstream there is a handline anchor (TR) from a chock stone into a pool which could be scouted for a jump J! Note you must cross the pool which flushes over the R3 waterfall. R3 (8m) DBA TL could also be scouted for a jump J! Beware the pool at the base of R3 is undercut on the TL.

Three minutes' walk downstream is R4 (15m) DBA TR, the 'Slalom Chute' requires two crossings of the main flow to reach the anchor of R5 on the TR below the 'Falcons Nest' rock feature and pour over. R5 (40m) DBA TR, rappel down the center of the fantail falls.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	45min
Canyon descent	2hr
Return to vehicle	15min
Total	3hr

Flash Flood Danger

Medium

Escapes

Two verified escapes on the TR after R2 and after R4.

Notes

First descent: 03 February 2020 (Justin Hall, Gabriela Scheufele, Steve Bruerton)


Fun to effort ratio: High when combined with the other Cass Valley canyons making the drive in worthwhile. An atmospheric, alpine, aquatic canyon full of character with a 15 minute walk back to a hut filled with everything you have driven in.

Access: Private land. Glenmore Station is run by Emily & Will who welcome adventurers and have established huts and maintain 4wd access in the Cass Valley. **Show your appreciation of their hospitality by ensuring you have access permission & use the huts at the base of the canyon (\$30 per person per night; 2020).**

For a video of the Cass valley canyoning trilogy first descents:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MPllqWSracLOWiZAv8vKdteqbQfOmlKi/view>

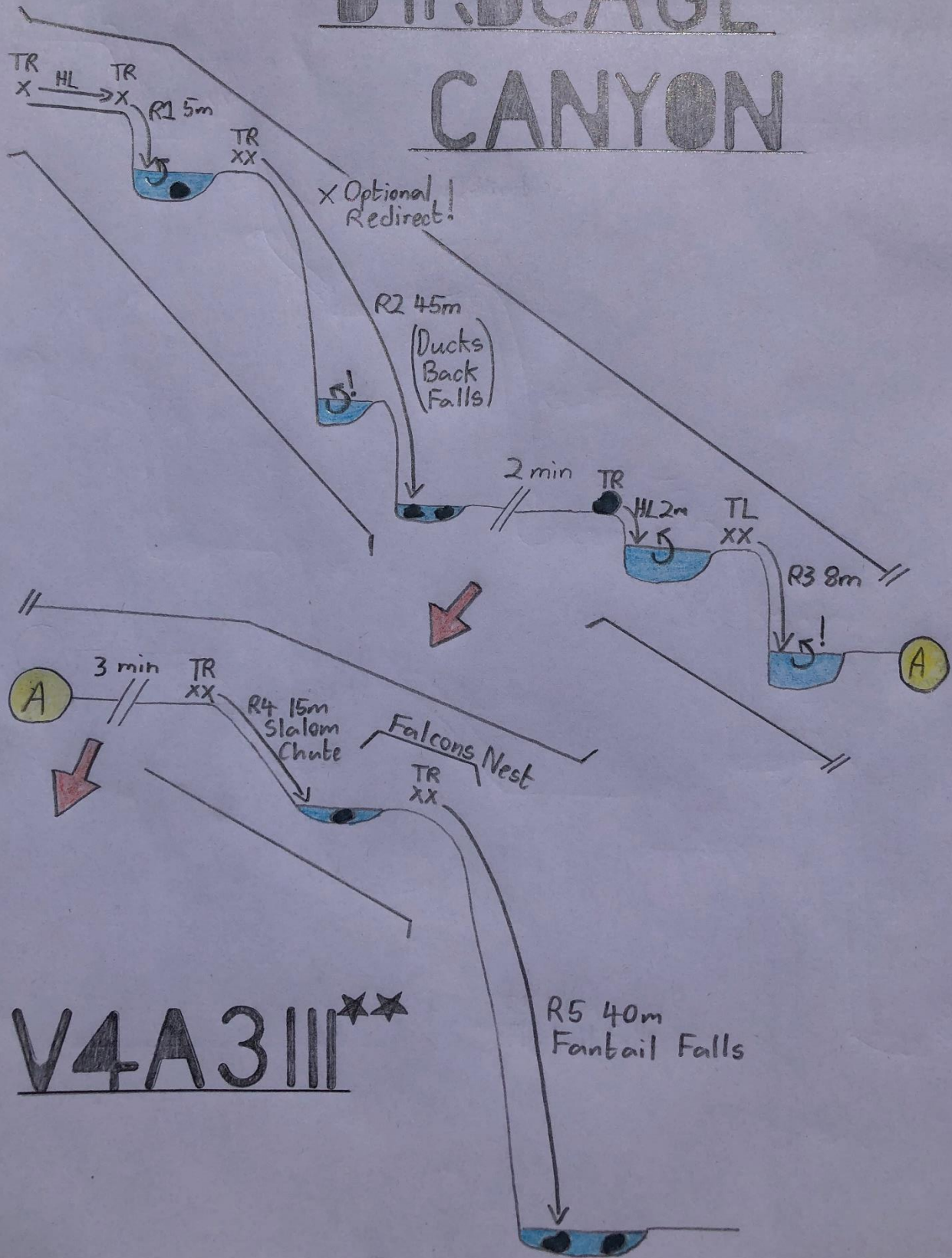
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