



FYFE

Gorge v2a3III ★

Location

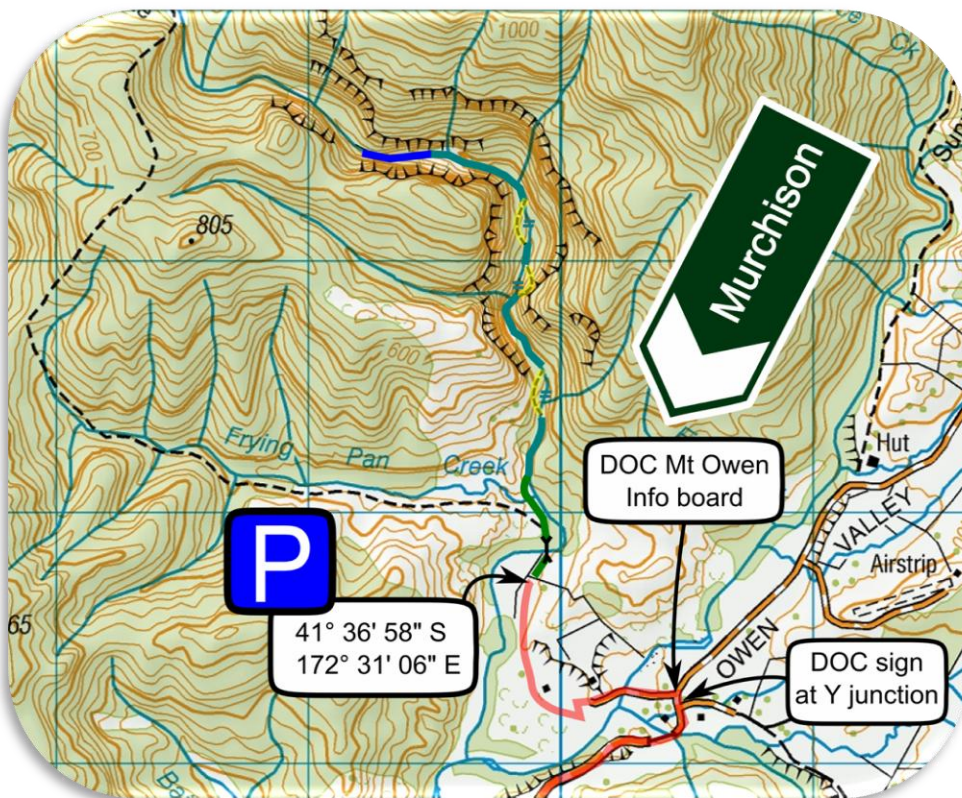
Fyfe River, southern side of Mt Owen, Kahurangi National Park.

Character

Challenging scramble up a deep limestone gorge to a swim up a short but spectacular marble slot canyon.

Map

BR23 Murchison



Middle Waterfall

Approach by Car

From Murchison, take SH6 north for 18km. Turn left onto Owen Valley East Rd. 11km from the highway, you'll cross a bridge over Brewery Creek. Just beyond the bridge, is a Y junction. A small DOC sign on a boulder in the middle of the Y directs you to the left. 100m along the road, at a T junction with large DOC information board, turn left and head down towards a grove of trees. Cross the Owen River on a reasonable ford. The rest of the way is through grassy paddocks along a legal road, following occasional DOC orange triangles. Park clear of any gates by the fence as shown. The paddocks are likely to be soft after rain. If so, park in the trees before the ford and walk the last bit.

Approach on Foot

From the car, follow the fence line north to a ford over the Fyfe. At the time of writing, there is **Didymo** just above the ford in the lower Fyfe River. To ensure it isn't spread up the gorge, cross the ford barefoot and use a didymo cleaning spray after crossing.

Walk up the TR bank of the river, jump across Frying Pan Creek, then enter the Fyfe River.

Rock

Limestone and Marble

Water

Waist deep pools in the gorge, long swims in very cold (cave resurgence) water. River levels must be low for this to be a viable trip. Full wetsuits required.

Catchment

37 km²
(due to resurgences, this could be *significantly* greater)

Anchors

No compulsory abseils, but the 2 main falls could be rappelled from sturdy trees.

Gear

Full wetsuits, Mask for scouting pools. Optional 40m rope if rappelling the falls.

Route Description

Enjoy interesting route finding and sometimes challenging scrambling through a limestone boulder field to ascend the gorge. These boulders lie together to form curious formations, waist deep pools, small caves and short canyons. Pink tape marks rock climbers side tracks used to avoid the main waterfalls. The bottom waterfall is about 20m, so must be sidled or rappelled. The middle fall is about 15m, and is easily sidled on the TL. The top fall is best sidled, as it forms a huge sieve with water pouring through boulders.

Above all the main waterfalls, the river seems to end at a large dead end pool and bluff, but after putting on your wetsuit, you can swim upstream through a narrow (50cm) canyon section. This entrance is very dependant on river level. In anything but low flows, the water will be higher and the gap too small to pass through. This is why this canyon is ascended, rather than descended from the Frying Pan Creek track.

From here, explore upstream, through slot canyon, one sided canyon, then and a final narrows section. There are options for jumping from 2-8m if your imagination and climbing ability allow.

Explore different routes on the descent, and keep an eye out for Whio/Blue Duck!

Time

Vehicle park to marble slot canyon	2h30min
Canyon exploration	1-2hr
Return to Vehicle	2h30min
Total	6-7hr

Flash Flood Danger

High. Very large catchment, short but inescapable narrows.

Escapes

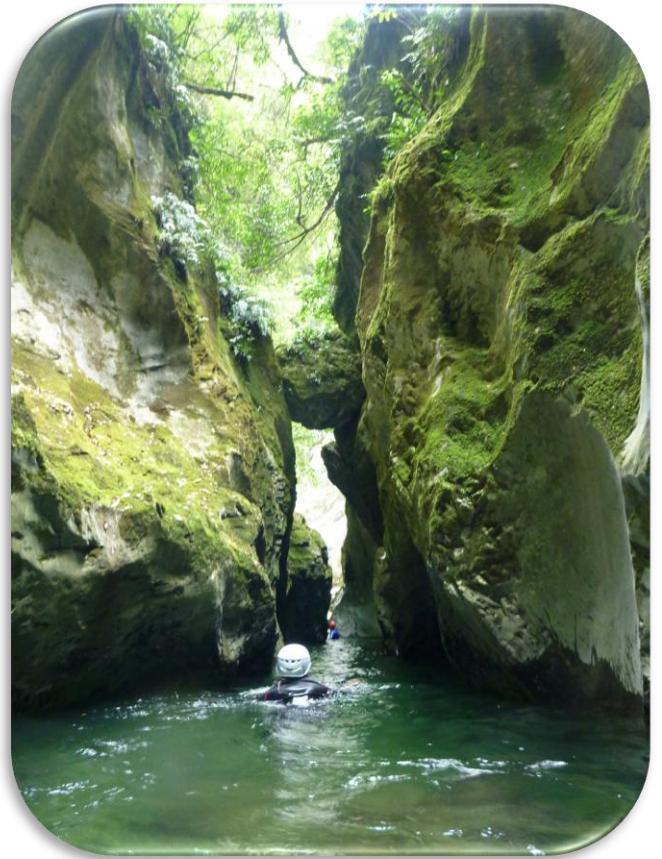
A climbers path exits on the TR halfway between the middle and bottom waterfall, look for pink tape. The trail leads to a ridge overlooking frying pan creek.

Notes

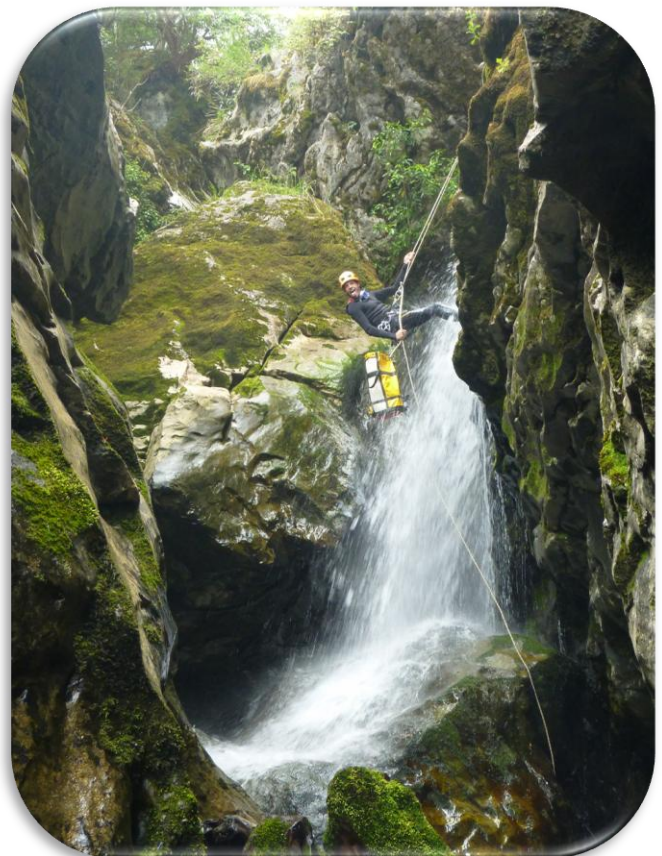
There is excellent Vodafone cell coverage at the parking spot.

It is worth visiting the **Fyfe River Gorge Climbing** Facebook Page for updates on access, a code of conduct for the gorge and current conditions.

A climbing info booklet, with very detailed access information can be found on the NZAC website, <https://alpineclub.org.nz/donation/fyfe-river-gorge> or by searching for PDF downloads.



Marble Slot Canyon



Bottom Waterfall

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Topo by Daniel Clearwater
www.KiwiCanyons.org