



BIG WAINIHIHI VIA WAINOTINOTI

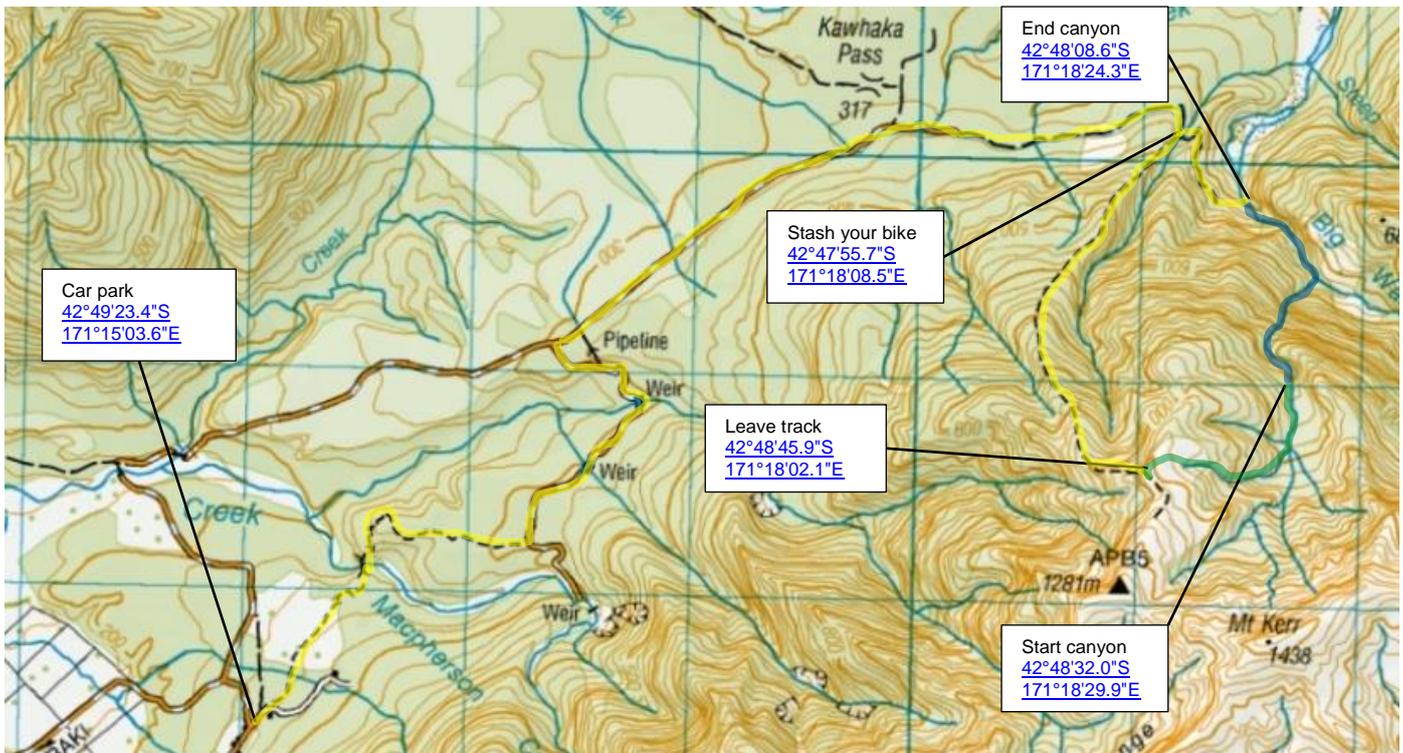
Canyons v4a4IV ★★ ★

Character

This trip has it all. A staunch multi-sport approach. Back-to-back high waterfalls in Wainotinoti. And finally, the jewel in the crown – jumps and whitewater problem solving in the slotted Big Wainihinihi. A big day out, but well worth it. Ask not why, ask Wainotinoti ('the water that squeezes tighter and tighter').

Map

[BV17 Lake Kaniere](#)



Location

Milltown, inland from Hokitika

Approach by Car

Drive to [Cowboy Paradise](#), which is 40 minutes from Hokitika via Lake Kaniere, and park your car there.

Approach by Bike and Foot

Prepare for a varied approach: some of the most scenic mountain biking on the West Coast, an 800m climb up an exposed ridge, bush bashing through sub-alpine scrub into the headwaters, and then at the end of the canyon a rickety old hydro access path!

From the car park, bike on the West Coast Wilderness Trail for 4.8km. It is easy riding with only a few small uphill sections. There is some single track but it is mostly 4WD road. At Kawhaka Pass, ride straight through rather than follow the cycle trail North. After a total of 6.9km of riding you will reach the start of the hiking track up Mt

Kerr. A few hundred metres beyond the start of the hiking track, the 4WD road ends at the gate to access the bottom of Big Wainihinihi – you may want to ride there first to be sure you're in the right place.

The start of the Mt Kerr track is a bit obscure to find – it starts on the true left of the creek before Wainihinihi, very close to the foot of the spur and is marked with pink tape. Don't follow the path next to the creek. If in doubt, bush bash to the ridge of the spur and you will soon find a well-marked and well-worn track.

The track climbs steeply, eventually reaching an exposed ridgeline. Once you reach semi-level terrain and have a view (at ~1,100m), you should leave the track and make a beeline for the closest tributary of Wainotinoti. The sub-alpine scrub is heinous, so pick a careful line between clearings. Get into the tributary as soon as possible and follow the creek itself – it is very low flow and easy travel. At 980m the creek goes over a short waterfall – sidle around it on the true right rather

than get your ropes out. The canyon proper starts fairly obviously at 820m. All in all, the access is not as traumatic as it reads (famous last words?).

At the exit of the canyon, follow the obvious hydro access track for a few hundred meters back to the 4WD road where you stashed your bikes. The hydro track is in disrepair so be very careful (the bridges and steps have either already collapsed or are about to). You will have to climb around the locked gate at the end of the track (the area is all public access according to WAMS).

Rock

Schist. Great quality in Wainihinihi, average in Wainotinoti.

Water

Wainotinoti is low flow, Wainihinihi high flow. Cold. You could in theory check flows by following the hydro track to the last waterfall, but this will take valuable time!

Catchment

1.4 km² for Wainotinoti, 9.3 km² for Wainihinihi.

Anchors

Tree anchors and double bolt anchors.

Gear

Minimum 2x80m rope. Suggest 1x80m and 2x60m.

Route Description

Wainotinoti is a fairly typical low volume, vertical canyon. Most of it is not slotted and vertical flow is not an issue in normal flows. The anchor stations are all easy to reach. But be careful not to stick your ropes, given how many waterfalls there are and how steep the terrain is. The 75m and 60m rappels are particularly nice. The final Wainotinoti waterfall lands you into a pool in the middle of Wainihinihi. Alternatively, you can bush bash around above the final waterfall and walk into Wainihinihi higher up, so that you can do one extra waterfall in Wainihinihi. Wainihinihi is like a little mini-Griffins creek, with lots of jumps and some whitewater problem solving. It is probably most similar in character to Mather's Creek in Wanaka. In regular flows it is fairly straight forward, but if you're not comfortable in pushy whitewater then it is not the place to be. To navigate the last waterfall, abseil into the pocket next to the bottom of the waterfall, go off rope, and then crawl behind the curtain or jump across it. Swim to true right of the final pool, staying well clear of the weir intake. Cross the pool using the cable above the weir – the final climb out is awkward.

Time

Vehicle park to bike stash	30m
Bike stash to start of canyon	3h
Wainotinoti descent	3h30m
Wainihinihi descent	2h
Return to vehicle	1h
Total	8-10h

Flash Flood Danger

High. Wainihinihi is not a place to be in higher than normal flows, given how enclosed it is.

Escapes

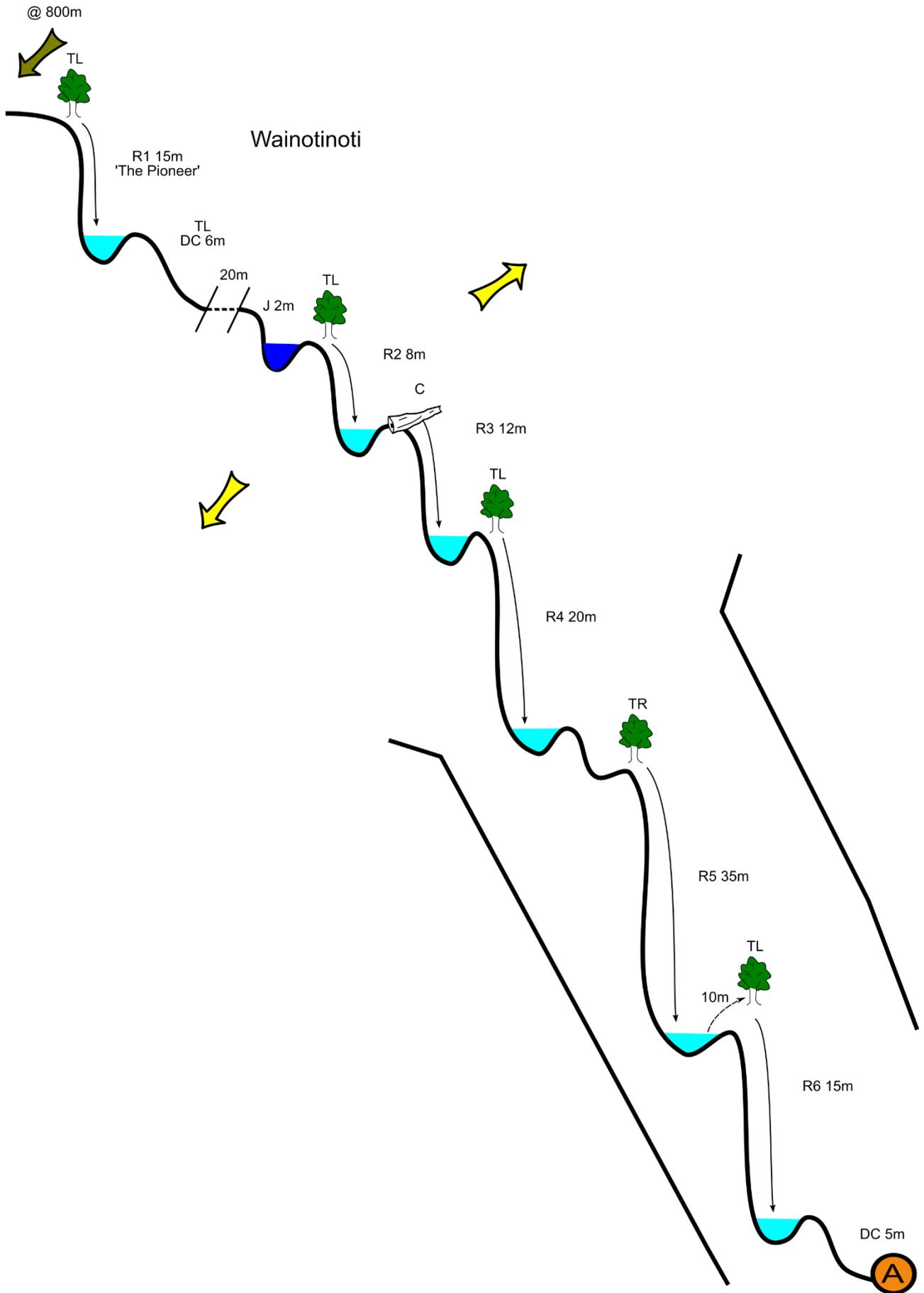
Plenty of escapes throughout Wainotinoti, although only into very steep terrain. Occasional 'escapes' throughout Wainihinihi, again into very steep bush. Once you enter Wainotinoti, the easiest way out is all the way through both canyons!

Notes

First descents: Wainihinihi – Justin Venable, Phil Palzer, Richard Bramley, Dec 2018. Wainotinoti + Wainihinihi – Chris Whitehorse, Mark Parfitt, Richard Bramley, March 2019

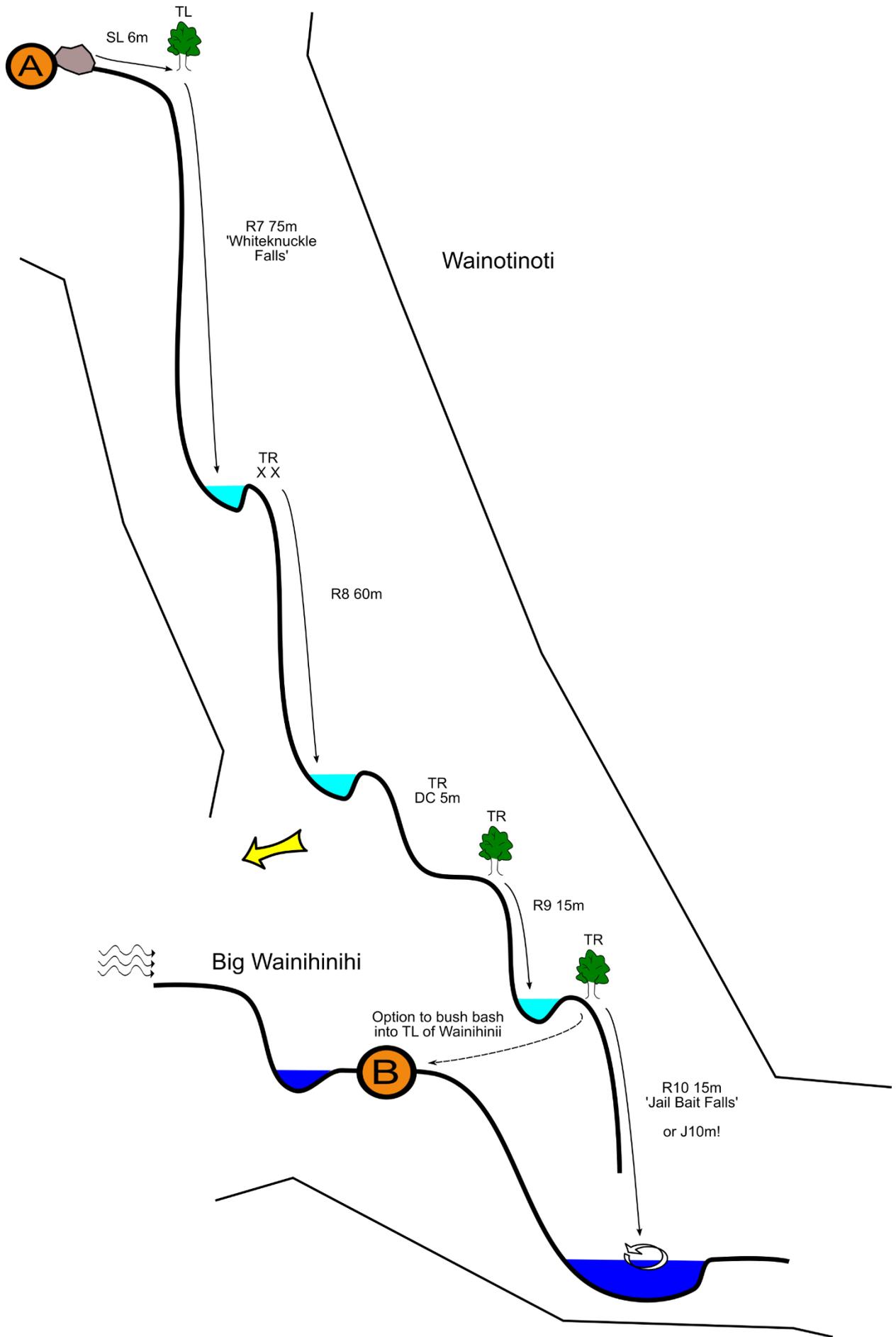
Fun2Effort Ratio: $(5 + 5.5) / 4.5 = 2.3$

Access to Wainihinihi alone is probably possible on the true right, but has not been attempted. Access on the true left is possible but very steep and not recommended.



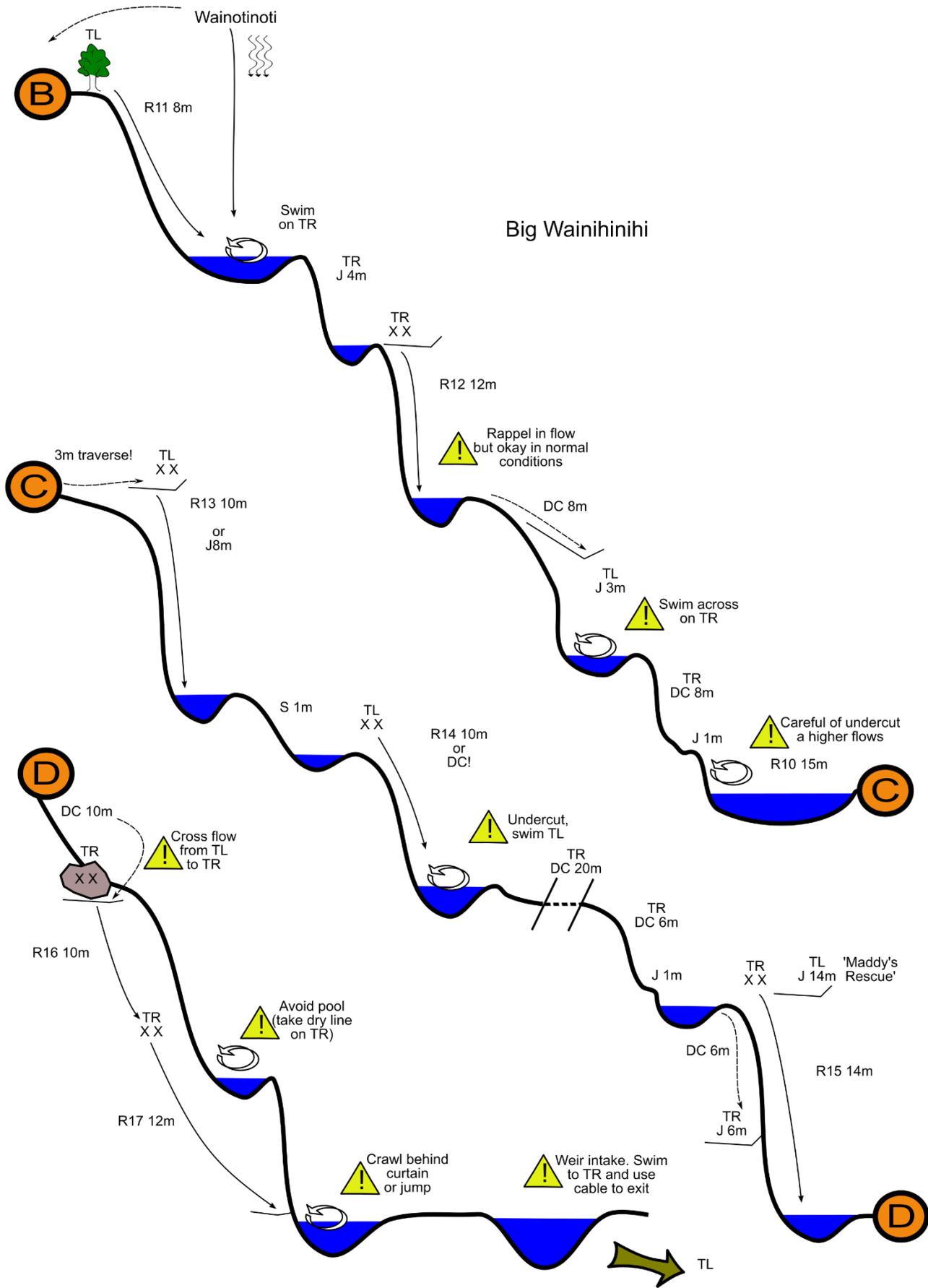
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