

Tawhiuau Canyon

Tawhiuau Canyon is a low flow steep mountain stream with multiple very large descents. The stream has carved some deep canyon sections into the Greywacke rock that open into spectacular horizon line views at the top of the bigger pitches. There is lots of rope work but all of the pools are shallow and full of gravel so there are no jumps or safe slides. Access to the trig at the top and back to the car from the bottom are made straight forward by well maintained walking tracks. Getting from the trig to the stream is a different story. It is a big day out with a lengthy approach with 700m height gain to the trig and a large amount of rope needed so be prepared for a big slog and a great adventure.



The Canyon is located a few kilometers east of Murupara just north of where the Whirinaki river flows out of the forest. The carpark is down an unmarked gravel road off Troutbeck road. If approaching from Murupara the road starts by a property with a large hedge along the front with Stihl signage at the gate. It runs parallel to Troutbeck road before turning right to run along the Mangamate stream. Stay on the right hand side of the stream until the small carpark by the walking track sign. There is some quarrying activity on this road so beware of large earth moving machinery. I would be careful as to what is left visible in your car as some parts around here are well known for car park break ins. The area is well used by hunters and locals keeping fit on the trails.

Follow the walking track across the Mangamate stream and along for a few hundred metres before taking the steep track at the wooden sign on the right. This track is very direct up the hill and wastes no horizontal distance to gain the 700m vertical to the views at the trig. From the trig you will need to bush bash your way down to the main stream, or it may be possible to hit the side stream that flows down just to the west of the trig (from where this stream joins the main river it appears that there will be multiple small pitches along it) and follow the pristine gentle river valley until you find a log jam and the river drops away.



Find a piece of wood in the log jam to fix your rope for R1 where you enter the solid canyon walls that are very impressive for a north island canyon. Use a handline to access anchor along thin ledge on R2. R4 and 5 make a 100m pitch with some serene views out over the Galatea plains and down the valley. There is a small ledge 25m down this huge pitch with another anchor to break up the descent. The line is out of the flow but if you had a rope long enough a single descent through the gentle spray of water would be awesome. From R6 onwards there is some very slippery down climbs that would become horrible slides if you were to slip so use a rope for the low angle stuff if in any doubt. At R10 there is a bolt on the TR which makes a nice abseil through the water flow where there are some sharp rocks hidden that resulted in a major bit of rope damage on the first descent. Use with caution alternatively there is a sling on a tree on the TL. R14 has the anchor in the floor of the canyon over the edge of the pitch to ensure smooth rope retrieval so this needs to be accessed using a HL on the TR which makes an almost hanging transfer from HL to abseil rope. At the bottom of R15 follow the river down keeping an eye out for the Galatea foothills track that takes you back to the carpark.

From the first descent in November 2015 it appeared that the canyon did not flood regularly and there were lots of natural anchors present. By the next visit in March 2016 almost all vegetation and natural anchor possibilities had been stripped away by a huge flood that was caused by an isolated thunderstorm that only effected this valley (Unknown to us before the trip). At time of writing some anchors are not in the best state as we did not carry all the gear to re bolt what were natural anchors



First Descent
Ryan Malcolm, Russell Hodgson, Wayne Darlington
6th November 2015

Photo from March 2016 of flood damage on side stream just above main canyon

