



EAST SABINE

Awe-Chasm

v4a5IV★ ★ ★

Location	East Sabine (Lake Rotoroa, Nelson Lakes)
Character	A very impressive, super slotted chasm, over 50m deep in places. Not very long or steep, but still an incredible canyon that is very committing. It is best done over a day and a half by overnighing at the nearby hut.
Time	Boat from Rotoroa to Sabine Hut: 30min Walk from Sabine Hut to canyon: 4.5hrs Canyon descent: 3hrs Return to Sabine Hut: 4hrs Total: 12hrs
Map & Coordinates	Topo map: BS24 Mt Robert Rotoroa carpark: -41.795893, 172.59709 Start of canyon: -42.015281, 172.70658
Highest Waterfall	15m
Suggested Gear	1 x 30m rope, 1 throw bag, headlamps
Canyon Distance	600m horizontal, 50m vertical
Rock	Greywacke, very hard
Flow	High volume, cold. 37.4 km ² catchment. First descent was done during low flows – the Matakitaki at Horse Terrace gauge (which is not that close) was 15m ³
Anchors	1 rappel uses a log. 2 rappels use single 8mm galv screw-ins. All need replacing with 10mm SS expansion bolts
Flood Danger & Escapes	High. Very narrow. No escapes
Approach by Car & Boat	Drive to Lake Rotoroa (30m from Murchison, 1hr30m from Nelson/Motueka). Take boat to Sabine Hut at head of lake (15km, lakerotoroawatertaxi.co.nz).
Approach on Foot	Hike to West Sabine Hut (15km, 3.5hrs from Sabine Hut), which sleeps 30 and is a good place to base yourself. Hike from West Sabine Hut to start of the canyon (3km, 1hr). Follow the first creek upstream of the East Sabine bridge down into the canyon. Exit the canyon back up the track by following the first creek on the true left after the slot finishes. The Sabine river can be pack rafted from West Sabine Hut to 4km before the lake (Class II/III), where you should exit to avoid the lower gorge (Class IV/V)
Canyon Route Description	The canyon enters a slot almost immediately and there are no escapes throughout. Most of it is very deep and sometimes you cannot see daylight. There are three short rappels at the beginning. The first avoids the flow altogether by dropping out of a hole on the true left. The second skirts the true right edge of the waterfall – much care must be taken to not get caught by the flow and end up in a nasty sieve. The third lands you into a white-water feature – packs are best passed using throwlines. After that there are numerous short drops and downclimbs, none requiring rappel, but a throwline tether may be useful. Requires confidence in white-water. Several pools are not as deep as they look. Finishes with a few hundred metres of floating through beautiful pools.
First Descent	Chris Whitehouse, Tom Jerram, Richard Bramley. 18 Feb 2021
Topo Author	Richard Bramley, 2 March 2021



