



LOWER TREE TRUNK GORGE

V4a3II ★★

Location

20km south of Turangi on the Tongariro River.

Character

One of the deepest, tightest, high volume canyons in the North Island. The gorge is occasionally descended by top kayakers. Canyoners can abseil in from the canyon rim below the waterfalls. Entering the canyon further up would likely be fatal. Take in the scenic nature of the gorge – it is a truly incredible place!

Map

Topomaps has incorrect positioning of the waterfalls.

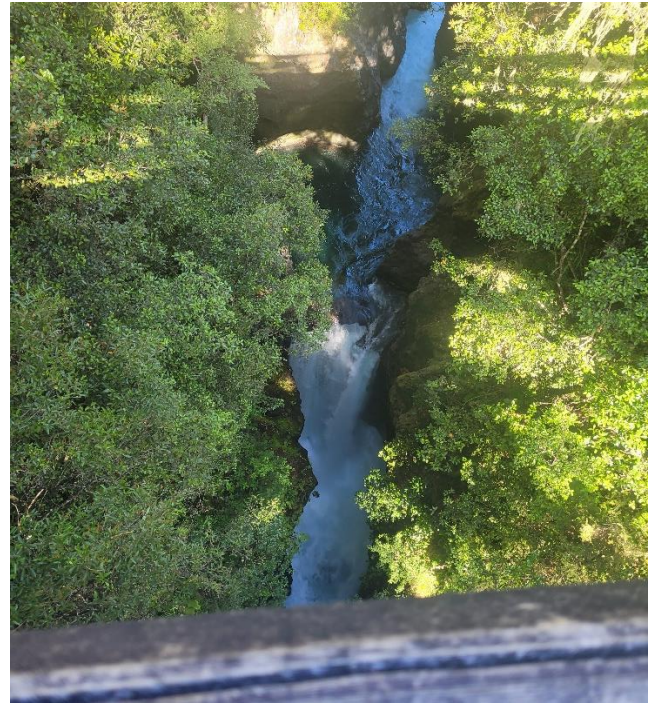
There are two large waterfalls that can be seen from the bridge (one just upstream, and one just downstream). These are hand-marked on the below map. Following this, the water is essentially flat – the waterfall marked further downstream on Topomaps does not exist. The canyon begins below the last hand-marked waterfall.



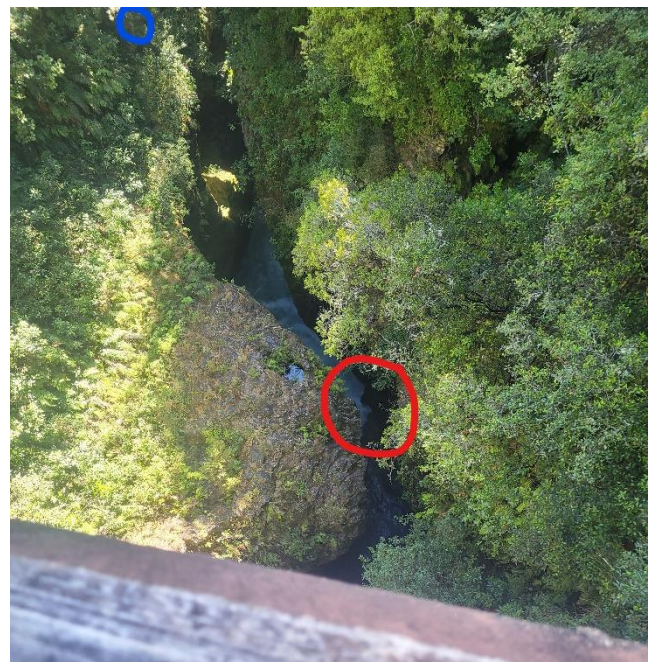
- || Correct waterfall placement
- Walk to start
- Float/Swim
- ▲ Walk back to start

Anchor coordinates: -39.17061, 175.80316

View from the bridge of the upstream waterfall:



View from the bridge of the downstream waterfall (red circle) and approximate anchor position (blue circle). Abseil in from the anchor below the waterfalls and swim/float down the gorge (flat or gently flowing water).



Approach by Car

Drive to the bridge at Tree Trunk Gorge Road and park in the carpark on the left, just before you go over the bridge.

Approach on Foot

Walk into the bush from the middle of the carpark on true left, parallel to the river heading downstream, and you should find a track. Follow that for 50m. Then, turn right down a (less obvious) track marked by orange tape to get to the anchor. Pink tape continues to the take-out.

Rock

Rhyolite.

Water

The water is cold, even in the middle of summer!

There are 3 recreational dam releases of this river each year for kayaking, known as Access 14 on the Tongariro River. These can be checked on the Genesis website for the Tongariro hydro scheme. The trip is still fine on release, but just be aware of the abseil finishing in higher flowing water potentially requiring more active efforts to get away from the undercut walls.

Catchment

Huge

Anchors

Natural anchors.

Ignore the bolts that can be seen whilst abseiling. They are for kayaking safety to access deadly undercuts and recirculating currents with rescue equipment. These are not safe to rappel into the water from.

Gear

Minimum 40m rope.

Floatation not required but might be nice... it's a long swim.

Route Description

Abseil down a hanging 40m drop into the gorge. The pool below has undercut walls. Landing in the middle of the flow will help you avoid them.

Float down the river to "Instagram Island" which is a great place for photos. You can climb up and jump off the islands too.

Keep floating until the wall on the left ends. Get out on a beach on true left before the rapids begin. Then follow the taped track back to the top.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	5m
Canyon descent	20mins
Return to Vehicle	10m
Total	35mins

Hazards

Loose rocks, undercuts, dam releases

Escapes

Once inside the gorge, the only way out is the take-out at the end of the gorge.

Notes

The waterfalls at Tree Trunk Gorge are spectacular and the best kayakers in the country will descend the last two drops.

Previously, all the drops were kayaked until logs jammed into the upper section, making it too dangerous.

The waterfalls have deadly undercuts around them, particularly the last one. Hence, the canyon begins after the waterfalls. Descending into the canyon further upstream than recommended could be fatal.

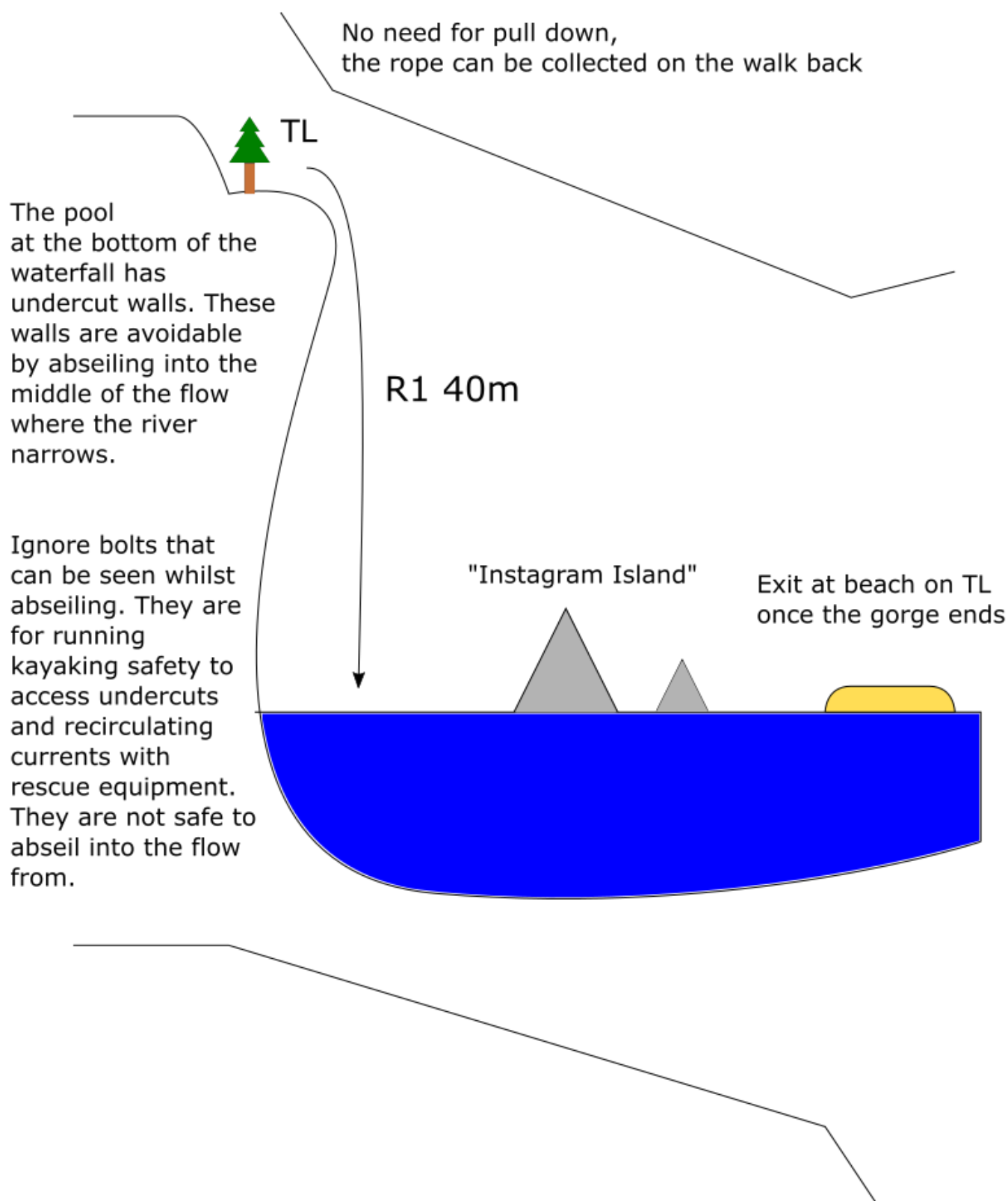
First known descent: James Judd in February 2021 after running safety for kayakers.

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*Topo by James Judd
and Danielle Cripps*
www.kiwicanyons.org

The canyon begins below the last waterfall. The last waterfall is 20m downstream of the bridge (there is only one waterfall after the bridge).



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Top – The waterfall
you abseil below
(Photo: James Judd)

Right - Abseiling in
on a hot day in mid-
summer with a
kayaking dry-top
and thermals. Don't
make that mistake,
wear something a lot
warmer, it's cold!
(Photo: Bence Pfiel)

Bottom – Looking
back up the gorge
from the island
(Photo: James Judd)



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