



DIEDRICHS

Creek v5a5IV ★★

Location

Tributary to the Hokitika river on river right, just before the Hokitika Gorge.

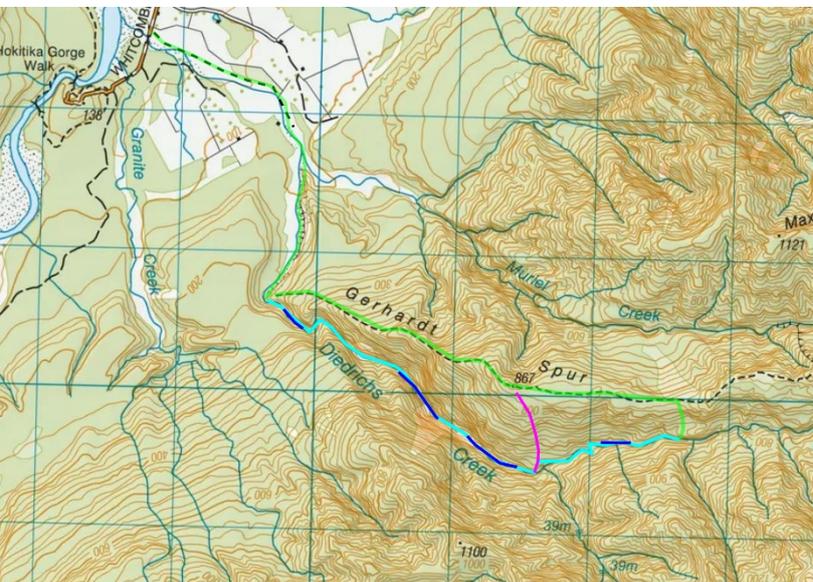
Character

A wild and rough west coast adventure canyon. Lots of open downclimbing on boulders between impressive and technical bedrock slot sections.

Sparse anchoring and significant flows demand good teamwork, problem solving, sequencing and sometimes, bold leads.

Lots of scrambling and jumping. 5-10 abseils depending on flows and how slippery the rock is. The rope comes out a lot for belays too.

Map



Approach by Car.

Drive towards Hokitika gorge, just past Precision Helicopters hanger the road goes over Diedrichs creek. Park on the north side of the bridge.

Heli drop off is a likely option and relatively cheap given the location of the base. Precision Helicopters. 0800 246 359

Approach on Foot

Access is pretty smooth given how much terrain is on offer, but it is a big day out, so start early!

From the north side of the bridge, a DOC sign indicates the start of a route along a farm 4WD track. Follow

orange triangles along the track, which drops down towards the river's edge through some boggy sections. Cross Muriel Stream and continue up the bank to the sharp bend where the Gerhardt Spur track is shown on the map. There's no marker, but the track is easy to find just inside the bush edge.

The track is steep, but fairly well marked and trodden for the west coast

Depending on how much you want to bite off, there are two main routes into the canyon.

Shortcut route

At the .867 feature head off into the bush towards the confluence of the stream with several marked waterfalls. The route is reasonably steep, but the bush bashing is fairly manageable. Near the confluence, route find into Diedrichs, heading downstream as needed. A rappel might be required.

Original route

From the .867 feature, continue along a relatively flat ridge for a further 1.3km. Just before the track climbs steeply again, bushbash south. The bush here is pretty tight, but don't be put off, it doesn't last too long! After descending 100m from the track, follow a small stream which heads west towards the canyon. The travel is easier on the stream's true left spur. 1 Abseil is required to get into Diedrichs Canyon.

Rock

Loose at times in the open sections contrasting with very solid bedrock schist in the slots.

Water

Moderate to high flows.

The technical difficulty of Diedrichs is very sensitive to flow levels, and there is no reliable gauge as of yet.

A little bit of extra water makes a big difference, because the crux scrambles and abseils are often through or very close to the main flow. U-shaped bedrock mean that its very difficult to avoid the flow in some key places.

In low flows, parties will no doubt find the canyon easier than it is graded and quicker to move through.

Catchment

9.6km² Expect snow melt till early summer.

Anchors

A mix of single bolts and natural anchors. Very sparsely rigged – groups should expect to place and repair bolts and natural anchors.

Gear

2 x 60 m ropes (minimum)

Drill and 6-8 bolts.

Natural anchor gear – webbing, maillions.

Wire brush for scrubbing key foot holds

A small cam and a couple of nuts could provide a bit more security in some spots.

Route Description

There is a lot of downclimbing boulders on this route, which is the main reason it is not a 3-start canyon. But, the bedrock slot features are impressive, beautiful and technical, which makes Diedrichs a very worthy outing.

The creek bounces in and out of bedrock slots with frequent 10-15m high features, but more rope is needed for belays and anchors back from the edge. The route through is seldom obvious – you'll often have to scout for small weaknesses and link these together to overcome the obstacle.

From the original entry to the confluence, - 2hrs

There's some good clean jumps plus exposed traverses to un-scoutable jumps up to 10m high. Easy boulder hopping plus sketchy downclimbs on narrow, slippery ledges. Simple approaches to solid natural anchors, plus scrappy forays into the bush for questionable foliage rappel anchors. A 30-35m pitch drops you in a boulder-field at the confluence.

Confluence to the end of technical canyon – 4-6hrs

The wide time window depends on the flows and how slippery the rock is... A wire brush might come in handy!

Although there's still plenty of boulder bashing, the valley walls begin to close in, and the bedrock slots become more impressive, beautiful and technical.

Sparse anchors will make you put your thinking caps on – especially when the flow is up. There's several features with a rappel to a jump ledge. Some jumps are optional, some are intimidating and compulsory. Tethered swims past strong currents and sometimes around blind corners might be required.

One two-stage abseil feature down bedrock on the left has a magnificent view of a side stream cascading into a verdant amphitheater.

About 1.5-2hrs from the confluence, the crux feature appears. The bedrock narrows to a 3m wide U-shaped chute ending in a horizon line. A belayed scramble in the full force of the river gives access to an exposed climb up on the TL, to natural anchors. Rap down a few metres

to a compulsory 8m jump. Or in low flow, there's a tiny ledge on the TR of the horizon line, giving a 10m jump.

A bedrock section where the pool disappears around the corner requires extreme care when the flows are up, to avoid getting flushed over the next hidden drop.

The bedrock relents, and more boulder-bashing begins. This section is quite lengthy and physical – you'll be tired by now.

Just when you thought it was over, the "Sting in the tail" provides a final burst of adrenaline and problem solving. A pitch from a bolt drops you into a cave-like spot, with overhanging walls. The pool curves out of sight round a corner, then goes over two small drops, then beneath a huge boulder. A tethered swim to a bolt that is hopefully there at the back left corner should allow the next leader to get a belay down the flow and scramble out left to ledges. A human anchor here allows the rest of the team to get around safely.

Around a few bends and you're back at the track!

Time

Original entry

Car park to original entry	3-4 hr
Original entry to confluence	2 hr
Confluence to end of canyon	4-6 hr
Return to vehicle	45 min
Total	9h45 -12h45

Shortcut route

Car park via shortcut to confluence	2h30 -3 h
Confluence to end of canyon	4-6 hr
Return to vehicle	45 min
Total	7h15 - 9h45

Flash Flood Danger

Outside the bedrock slot sections, there are many places to sit out a flood.

Escapes

Although each slot section is not super long, the valley walls are extremely steep with bluffs. Escape back to the track would be very difficult or impossible.

First descent

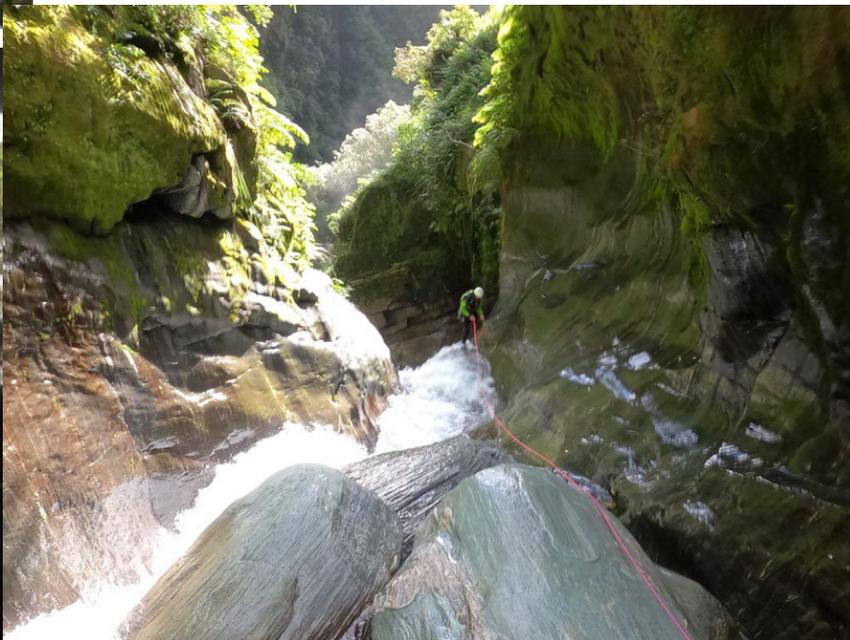
On the back of the Muriel descent 3 years earlier, Diedrichs had been looked at as Muriel's twin sister. Access, location and character appeared similar, just turn right rather than left on the approach.

Probing in from the bottom came to a dead end pretty quickly (which was a good sign). Easter Friday, 2022, Keith Riley, Big Al and Greg Lee dropped in to discover Diedrichs was the much more attractive and playful sister to Muriel.

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Original 2022 Topo by Keith Riley,
2026 Update by Dan Clearwater
www.kiwicanyons.org



First descent, Apr 2022.



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Original 2022 Topo by Keith Riley,
2026 Update by Dan Clearwater
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Third descent, Jan 2026.



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