



IMPASSABLE GORGE

canyon v3a3VI ★★ ★

Location

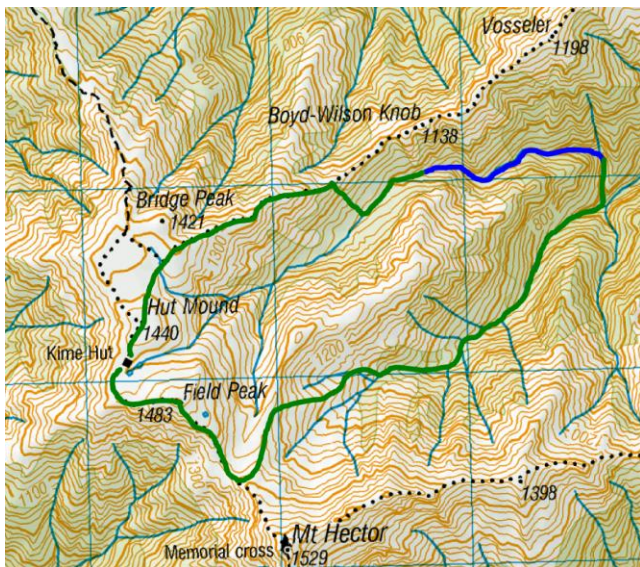
Tararua; feeding the Hector River, below Kime Hut.

Character

No tumbling streamway – this canyon “within a gorge” loses 300m of elevation in a kilometer over dozens of drops. Improbably scenic & constantly engaging – the grading doesn’t do justice to what is involved; it is still an adventure. Fit, experienced groups should expect a 12-hour day. A hidden gem – catches the morning sun.

Map

BP33 Featherston



Approach by Car

Park at Otaki Forks car park (now ~3km before the forks).

Approach on Foot

Walk to Otaki Forks then Kime Hut via Field Hut (6 hours).

From Kime Hut follow the track to Maungahuka, dropping into the stream feeding the canyon before the climb up to Moyd-Wilson Knob. Follow the stream down to the first waterfall (1.5 hours).

Approach by Helicopter

Fly to Kime Hut with Kapiti Heliworx from Paraparaumu Airport (20 mins).

Rock

Greywacke, generally good quality.

Water

Moderate flow in summer. The trip requires a sustained good weather window to be completed safely.

Warning!! The canyon is graded as it was found the day after rain in summer (January 2024). It clearly takes substantial volumes of water regularly. There are unavoidable debris sieves which would prove extremely hazardous in greater than normal flow.

Catchment

2.5 km².

Anchors

10-12 of the many drops are exploration rigged; in the majority tree slings, rock threads, wrapping of jammed logs and the occasional fixed anchor. Some anchors are out of the way and involve an exposed climb “on belay” to access them.

Most drops are either down climbed or require the lowering of one member from a “meat anchor” to scout a jump into a pool.

Parties should bring with them material to build their own back up or emergency anchors.

Gear

Rope; longest rappel 20m. Recommended minimum 1no 40m rope & 1no 10m hand / access line. (Note the largest waterfall ~30m can be downclimbed to half height and a rock thread on the true right).

Emergency bivy gear; a fit experienced group moving efficiently will likely take 12 hours to return to Kime Hut.

Route Description

No tumbling streamway – this canyon “within a gorge” loses 300m of elevation in a kilometer over dozens of drops, approximately a third of which are rappels.

Between drops there are numerous scenic features – weeping walls, adjoining waterfalls, syphons, a huge arch, pools, pockets of goblin forest, water worn caves and overhanging walls.

The technical grade does not do the canyon justice (v3a3), the canyon is best explored “as found on the day” by each group in the knowledge that it “does go” with care and caution.

Scout pools before jumping, many have specific landings & be prepared to belay out to anchors.

Exit

Not to be underestimated, the route back to Kime Hut is almost as long in time as the canyon itself. Follow the streamway down to the first adjoining stream on the true right and follow this up to the “Field – Hector” col. This stream has half a dozen waterfalls which can't be climbed directly, however the valley is wide enough that they can all be bypassed in the bush (all be it steeply).

Time

Kime Hut to start of canyon	1.5hrs
Canyon descent	5hrs
Return to Kime Hut	5.5hrs
Total	12hrs

Flash Flood Danger

Catastrophic once embedded in the canyon.

Escapes

Once embedded in the canyon, quite limited. There will be opportunity here and there to get out of the flow. However full escape after the first few rappels would likely only be downstream.

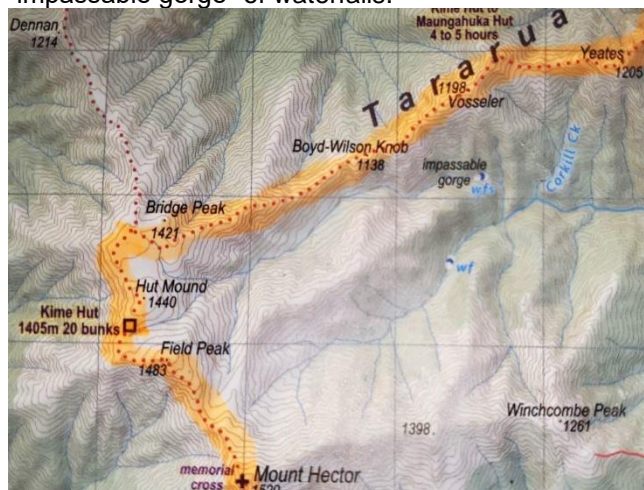
Notes

First descent: 22 Jan 2023 & 21 Jan 2024 (Julian Dunster, Ola Lofquist, Justin Hall, Gavin Holden, Alex Horvat)

Fun to effort ratio; A full weekend - big adventure trip.
Access issues; Public land.

Name

The Tararua Tramps 1:55000 map notes it as the “impassable gorge” of waterfalls.



Photos

Entry rappel, 10m.



A Rappel somewhere mid canyon, 15m.



Exit Rappel, 20m.



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