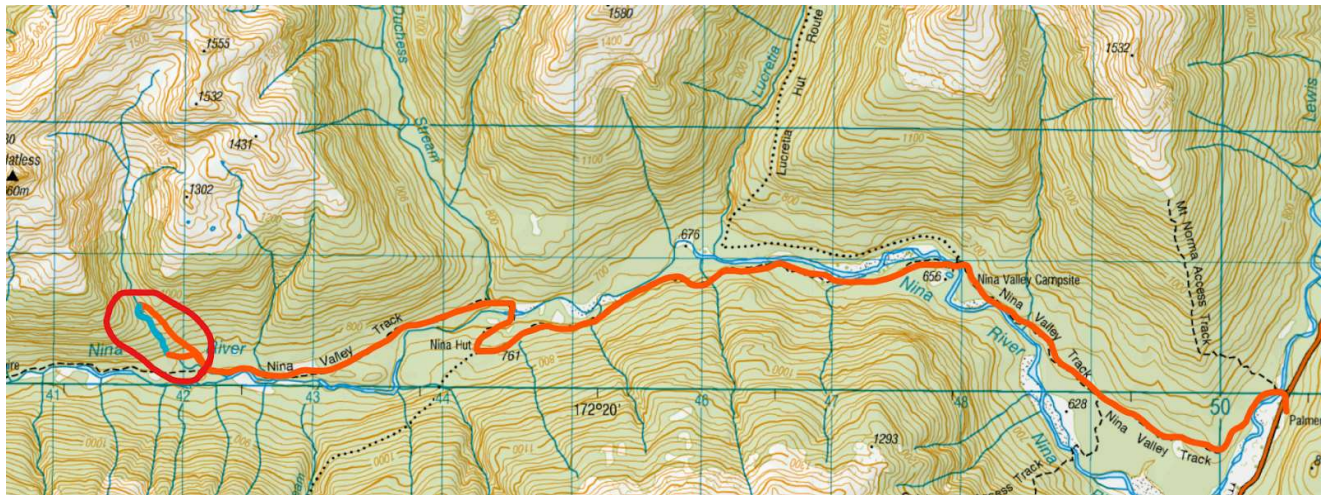




# ARCH-DUCHESS

## Canyon v4a3IV ★



### Location

Lewis Pass

### Character

A fun canyon with a long walk. Many drops end in swims across blue pools, and there are some good pitches and some jumps possible. Finish with a 30m pitch through a natural rock arch.

### Map



This is the unnamed creek below The Grand Duchess and Mt Hatless.

### Approach by Car

Park at Palmer Lodge, by the start of the Nina track.

### Approach on Foot

Follow the Nina track to Nina Hut, then continue on the track to Upper Nina Biv for another hour to where the creek crosses the track. Without dropping down to the creek head uphill and West, to meet the creek once the terrain becomes steeper. The bush here becomes mostly lower and less thick, and you will be able to see into the canyon. Continue uphill until it is easy to drop down into the gorge - no abseiling or climbing down required.

You will have to cross the Nina river (knee deep) and other tributaries - DO NOT bring didymo from these into the canyon.

### Rock

Greywacke.

### Water

Low flow, reasonably cold.

### Catchment

2.5 km<sup>2</sup>.

### Anchors

Mostly single bolted. The 2 bigger pitches have double bolt anchors. Some simple natural anchors required from easily reached trees and a boulder pinch. Bring some webbing/maillons for the natural anchors.

### Gear

Two 40m ropes recommended - the last pitch is about 30m so could be possible with a single 60m rope, but it hasn't been measured exactly. Bring natural anchor rigging gear.

## Route Description

Begin by downclimbing some small drops before reaching the first pitch. There is a short section of walking before the R2&3 sequence. The pool below R2 pours over into R3, so the first person at least should stay on the rope to reach the R3 anchors. R3 is a standout feature, ~23m in full vertical flow into a round blue pool.

R5, 6, and 7 are back to back, with R7 exiting the gorge. There is potential for a strainer above R6, although we had no trouble with it. Below the horizon line after R7 is the final pitch and the archway. Most of the pitch is not easily visible from the top and it ends on some very slippery rocks. Rock cracks below the arch could be an entrapment hazard - easily avoided but be aware.

R6 is a good jump, R2 and R5 may also be jumpable. Escape into the forest TL below the final pitch to avoid the slippery rocks, then follow next to the creek for 15 minutes to reach the track again.

## Time

### Approach/return along the track:

Vehicle park to Nina Hut	2h30min
Nina Hut to the creek	1h
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3h30min</b>

### The canyon:

Leaving the track to canyon start	40min
Canyon descent	2-3h
Canyon end back to the track	15min
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3-4h</b>

**Total:** ~11h

## Flash Flood Danger

Low

## Escapes

The canyon should be easily escapable most of the way. The gorge walls are shallow or may be scrambled up in many places. To escape from the top of R3 you would have to ascend up the rope on R2.

## Notes

**Do not bring didymo from the Nina river into the canyon!**

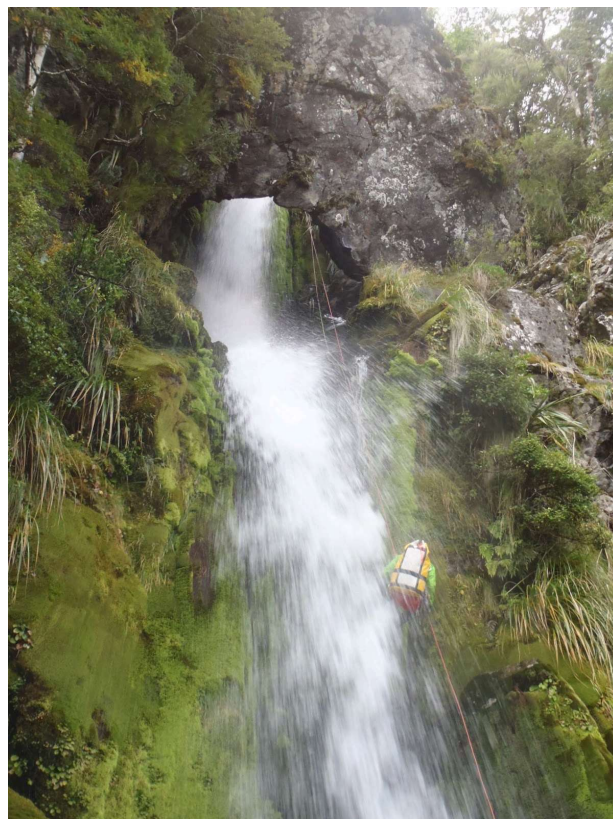
The slippery algae below the arch must have been brought up here by people walking up from the track to look at the arch, make sure to not bring any of this higher up the canyon by washing your boots etc with dishwashing liquid before starting the canyon.

First descent: Conor Handley, Amy Burney, Christian Miller, March 2024.

## Some trip suggestions:

The times stated are from a trip going into Nina Hut the previous night, then canyoning and walking out in a day. Although the Nina track is flat, it's just muddy and rough enough to make it slow with a heavy bag. Bringing overnight gear to stay at the hut is probably not the fastest way. Camping by the road (Deer valley campground?) and doing it in one day with a lighter bag might be better. Alternately do a night at Nina hut on either side and enjoy a tramp and canyon with no time pressure.

**R8:** The arch.



**R3:** 'The Ladle Pitch'









R5 and R6: Deep blue pools.