



LOW CREEK

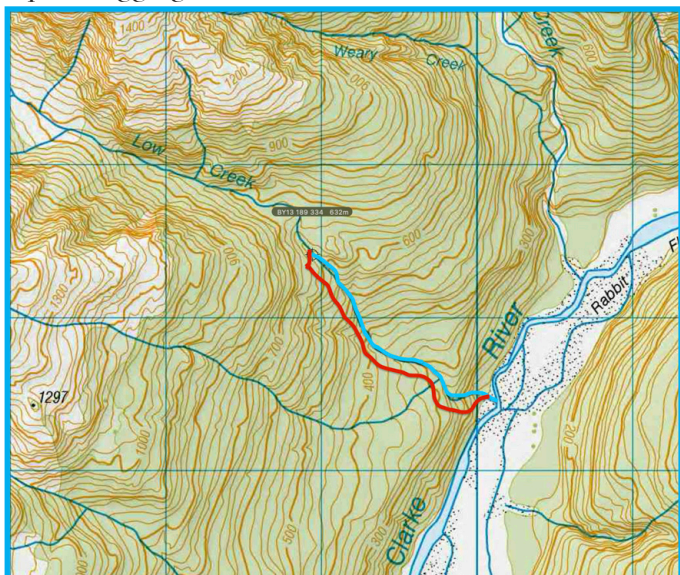
Canyon v5a4III ★★

Location

Clarke river, Landsborough, West Coast, New Zealand

Character

A relatively open descent alternated with two distinctive enclosed sections which requires some technical and aquatic rigging.



Map BY13 - Lake Paringa

Parking spot: BY13 184 273

WGS84: S 43.95324 E 169.49100

Start of the canyon: BY13 190 333

WGS84: S 43.90363 E 169.50469

Approach to campsite

From the Haast pass highway take the 4x4 track that passes the Central Otago Deerstalkers Landsborough Hut and keep following it up the Landsborough valley. The last part of the track is in bad shape and you will need a 4x4 with high clearance and the associated skills to drive it. Park the car somewhere near the Landsborough river.

Cross the Landsborough river and continue on foot up

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the Clarke valley. There is a convenient camping spot just below the canyon on the true right bank of the Clarke river.

Depending on water levels, both the Landsborough and Clarke river might become difficult to cross. Wash your gear before you enter the canyon! It is now free from [Didymo](#).)

Approach to canyon

Start walking up on the true right of the canyon. You can stay pretty close to the canyon and catch a glimpse of what is to come. You cross a small stream and traverse into the canyon around the 440m contour.

There is a possibility to only do the bottom part of the canyon. You start in the small stream on the TR of the canyon around the 300m contour. Two small abseils will bring you into the canyon.

Rock

Schist

Water

The canyon takes a serious volume of water. Some technical manoeuvring through, or around, the flow is required to pass some of the obstacles. Only commit to this canyon if you are comfortable in high flow canyons!

Catchment

10 km²

Anchors

Exploratory rigging!

Most descents are equipped with (single) 10 mm stainless steel 306 expansion bolts and [Tebylon](#) Hangers. Trees are rigged with 5 mm Dyneema (HMPE) or webbing and a [Tebylon half ring](#). Some 10 mm holes were drilled for temporary bolts.

Gear

2x 45 m ropes. (Re)bolting kit.

Some of the anchors are placed in exposed positions and might have disappeared since the last descent.

Route Description

An open section of the canyon brings you to a three-way(!) junction in the stream. The middle stream starts very easy, and you start to wonder what all the fuss is about. When the stream steepens up, two abseils (R3 & R4) from trees (TL) will bring you to the edge of a roaring gorge where one of the streams joins again on the right. Here it is serious business and the first person down needs to traverse over some wild rapids to a calmer pool where you can set up a guided rappel for the lesser mortals in your team.

R6, 5 m (TL) and R7, 15 m (TR) abseil bring you to a more open section of the canyon. The 15 m abseil requires a traverse of the full stream just above the drop to reach the main anchors. A bolt for a handline is hidden behind the big boulder on the right.

If you didn't like the first enclosed section this is the time to look out for an escape on the left as the second enclosed section is much more demanding.

After some easy terrain, a down climb on the TL brings you to the start of the second enclosed section. A short abseil (R11) and a traverse bring you to a bolt on the TL. From here you can belay the first person to the DBA of R12 (TL). R12 can be splashy, and it is not recommended to abseil all the way into the turbulent pool right below the abseil, but to traverse out of the flow and into the big calmer pool. It is possible to rig a guided rappel here to some anchors just right of the big boulder you can see from the top of the abseil.

You traverse behind the big boulder and make a 5 m abseil (R13) to the top of the crux pitch (R14). Here a roaring waterfall drops underneath a massive chockstone that is wedged across the full width of the canyon. A series of 3 deviations keeps you mostly out of the flow but missing one, or a slip while rigging it, could potentially be very serious!

It is advised to rig a guided rappel onto the huge boulder to keep the rest of the team out of the flow. A floating anchor might be useful to get the rope to the right position.

After making some moneyshots of this beautiful rappel one easy abseil is left. From here it is a 5 minute walk to the campsite.

Time

Haast pass highway to camping spot	4-6 hrs
Walk in from camping spot	1h45min
Canyon descent	4-5h
Return to camping spot	5min
Total (from camping spot)	5h50min

Flash Flood Danger

The two enclosed sections are quite aquatic and it wouldn't be a very nice place to be in a flash flood.

Only to be done during settled weather.

Escapes

Escape from the enclosed sections is not possible. Outside these there are possibilities on both sides of the river but none were tested.

Notes

First descent: 20 & 22-03-2025

[Dutch Canyoning Expedition](#) - Erik Birkhoff, Erwan Coq, Pepijn Hoeksema, Bas Hetterscheid, Britt Joosten, Jaap Sikkema, Bram de Vries, Loys van Asten

A very nice descent with some exciting and technically challenging sections!



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**Guided Rappel
R5**





R12



R14





R15



R9



EXPEDITION NZ 2025



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