



KOWHAI CREEK

Canyon v4a4III ★

Location

Kinloch Road, Glenorchy

Character

A short canyon, messy in places but with a few good well enclosed pitches. The a4 grade is due to one particular feature in the canyon, in the absence of this feature the grade could be considered v4a2.

The canyon is slippery throughout.

Map



Approach by Car

Park at the base of Kowhai Creek on the Kinloch Road. There is a small one car pulloff just before the bridge on the left as you are driving from Glenorchy.

Approach on Foot

Enter the forest on the true left of the creek and head up the route of least resistance. There is a route marked in red ribbon but in general the bush is relatively open and easy to move though.

Enter the canyon at roughly 550m elevation. The red ribbon, potentially placed by a previous canyoning team, continued further. However, the creek was open and messy at this stage so a higher entry was not investigated.

Following R6, return to the car by boulderbashing or entering the forest. There may be a few further small features downstream which were also not investigated on this trip.

Rock

Schist

Water

Medium flow. Pools are mostly shallow and easy to walk through with the exception of the main pool at the base of R5 which is deep in places with a current and whitewater. There is also an easily avoided potential siphon on the TR of this pool.

Catchment

3.4 km² Some high level snow above.

Anchors

A combination of threads, bolts and a tree. Mostly single point anchors with the exception of R5 and R6 which have two point anchors. R3 has an optional thread used as a redirect to avoid a log at the base of the pitch.

Gear

At least one 50m rope.

Route Description

The start of the canyon begins messily with a long low angle pitch (R1).

After this pitches are reasonably back to back with no significant walking sections. R1 - R4 are not quality canyoning but can provide some fun.

R3 has a redirect thread to avoid a log in the water, this redirect was awkward to clip and may not be necessary if you are careful to avoid entrapment associated with the log.

Although only one escape was noted between the start and end of the canyon, the canyon only begins to feel properly enclosed from the base of R4 onwards. For this section the walls are tall, mostly bare rock and the canyon quality improves.

R5 presents the main challenge of the canyon with the pitch passing through the flow and the landing area obscured from view. The base of this pitch has a pool on the TL where the majority of the water is directed. Although short, this may require care to cross and the eddy is strong enough to hold bags. On the TR there is also a potential siphon under a boulder which in normal flows is unlikely to pose a hazard as most of the current goes around it.

Exit to the TL following R6 and rejoin the ribbon trail back to the car. There may be a few small features downstream, however the creek is quite slippery and further travel downstream didn't seem worth it.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	30min
Canyon descent	1h30min
Return to vehicle	15min
Total	2h15min

Flash Flood Danger

Moderate, from R4 to the end of the canyon two reasonably technical pitches would need to be navigated to exit, this could take 30 minutes to achieve.

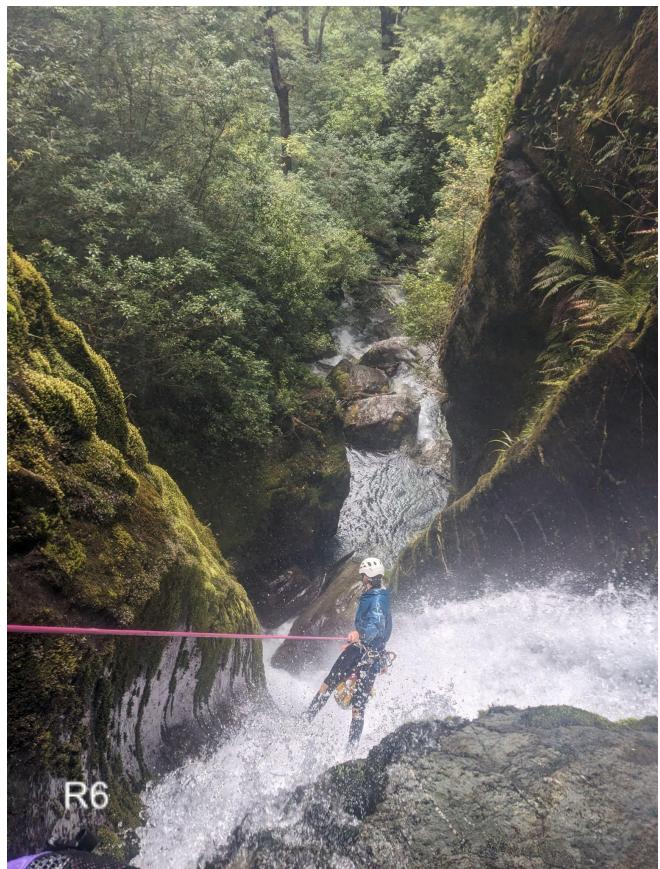
Escapes

One likely escape was noted at the top of R4.

Notes

First descent: Unknown

Canyon Topo: Amy Burney and Christian Miller, Jan 2026



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Topo by Amy Burney
www.kiwicanyons.org

Page 2

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