



# SOLITUDE CREEK

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## Canyon v3a3III ★★

### Location

West of Murray Saddle near Hokitika Gorge. Feeds into Doctor Creek.

### Character

Solitude Creek is a fun canyon with Haast Pass vibes. It has 8 straightforward rappels ending in big deep pools - many of which can be jumped. A unique feature is The Lonely Siphon (a benign siphon in normal conditions) that swallows the entire flow under a rock bridge. The canyon's proximity to commercial helicopter transport makes it a relatively affordable heli-canyon trip and can shorten the length of the trip by 6 to 8 hours.

### Map



Approach and return in purple, canyon in light blue.

### Approach by Helicopter

Access via helicopter can be arranged through Precision Helicopters ([precisionhelitours.com](http://precisionhelitours.com)) located near Hokitika Gorge on Whitcomb Valley Road. The cost per person, at time of writing, is NZ\$200 return or NZ\$100 one way, per person for a team of 4 (max helicopter capacity).

The helicopter can land at the base of the canyon in Doctor Creek and is marked on the map above.

The walk out, if you choose not to fly out, is via the Murray Saddle track back to Hokitika Gorge carpark. The walk out is ~8 km and will take between 3 and 4 hours.

### Approach on Foot

The route from the end of the canyon (junction of Solitude and Doctor creeks, near where the heli lands) to the start is not marked but is a short walk on a semi formed use track on the river left up to the entry point at 330m elevation. The canyon has steep walls, so enter the creek as soon as it becomes open and bouldery.

If you decide not to fly in, then you will need to reverse the "Exit on Foot" route to access the canyon. Allow 3-4 hours for this approach option.

### Exit on Foot (if not taking the heli)

If you decide not to fly out, walk up Doctor Creek for approx 100m and join the Murray Saddle track marked on NZ topographic maps. The exit is approximately 7.5 km and will take approx 3 to 4 hours.

The Murray Saddle track is marked with white trail markers. Significant portions of the track are incorrectly drawn beside Surveyors Creek or Minnow Creek when in reality the creek is the track. Don't be surprised if you find yourself walking on the sides of the creek for long stretches. Do not worry, the creek walking is easy.

[Minnow Creek Canyon v4a2II](#) lies on the exit track. It would be feasible for a team to complete both canyons in one day.

Walk downstream along the river left of the Hokitika River, following the white and yellow trail markers slightly in from the river edge to the suspension bridge near the Hokitika Gorge carpark.

### Rock

Granite.

### Water

Moderate flow.

### Catchment

6 km<sup>2</sup>

### Anchors

Double bolts.

### Gear

At least 1 60m, recommended 2 ropes.

Although the anchors are placed to be sheltered from floods, it would be sensible to take a drill and bolts if the canyon hasn't been done recently.

## Route Description

Canyon descent is straightforward. All anchors are double bolted.

While most jumps are into large deep pools, the water is very dark and can hide obstacles. Check jumps first. On R4 the rock slopes outwards underwater, so although it looks like a perfect jump it would require jumping out very far.

The siphon at the end of the R6 pool is benign in normal conditions. The water flows through a large keyhole several metres under the water. It is likely the keyhole is also a sieve as it appeared to be clogged with large logs (water was so dark we couldn't confirm). Swim to the shortest part of the rock bridge and climb up, there are some good holds to be found. It is possible to check the bridge water levels by exiting on river right above the anchor from R5, and abseiling onto the bridge from a tree. At R5, both the escape and the anchor are reached by climbing up on the right of the boulder to reach a higher ledge.

The technical jump on R9 has an eddy at its base that can be escaped with a hard swim.

## Time

### Walk in option

Hokitika Gorge carpark to end of canyon	3 - 4 h
Ascent from canyon end to start	30 min
<b>Total approach</b>	<b>3.5 - 4.5h</b>

### Helicopter in option

Flight time	15 min
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<b>Descent</b>	<b>2-3 h</b>
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### Walk out option

End of canyon to Hokitika Gorge carpark	<b>3 - 4 h</b>
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### Helicopter out option

Flight time	15 min
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<b>Total</b>	<b>3 h - 11.5 h</b>
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## Flash Flood Danger

Moderate.

## Escapes

Escape possible (confirmed) from top of R5 on RL.

## Notes

**First descent:** Linden Brown, Rata Lovell-Smith and Phil Palzer. The canyon was used mostly by kayakers for a few years before it was bolted and documented as a canyoning route in 2026.

### First bolted descent:

Alex Motyka, Alex Thexton, Christian Miller, Harry Day, Hereward Cooper, Joseph Cruikshank, Michael Banyi, Sarah-Jane Petts. January 2026.

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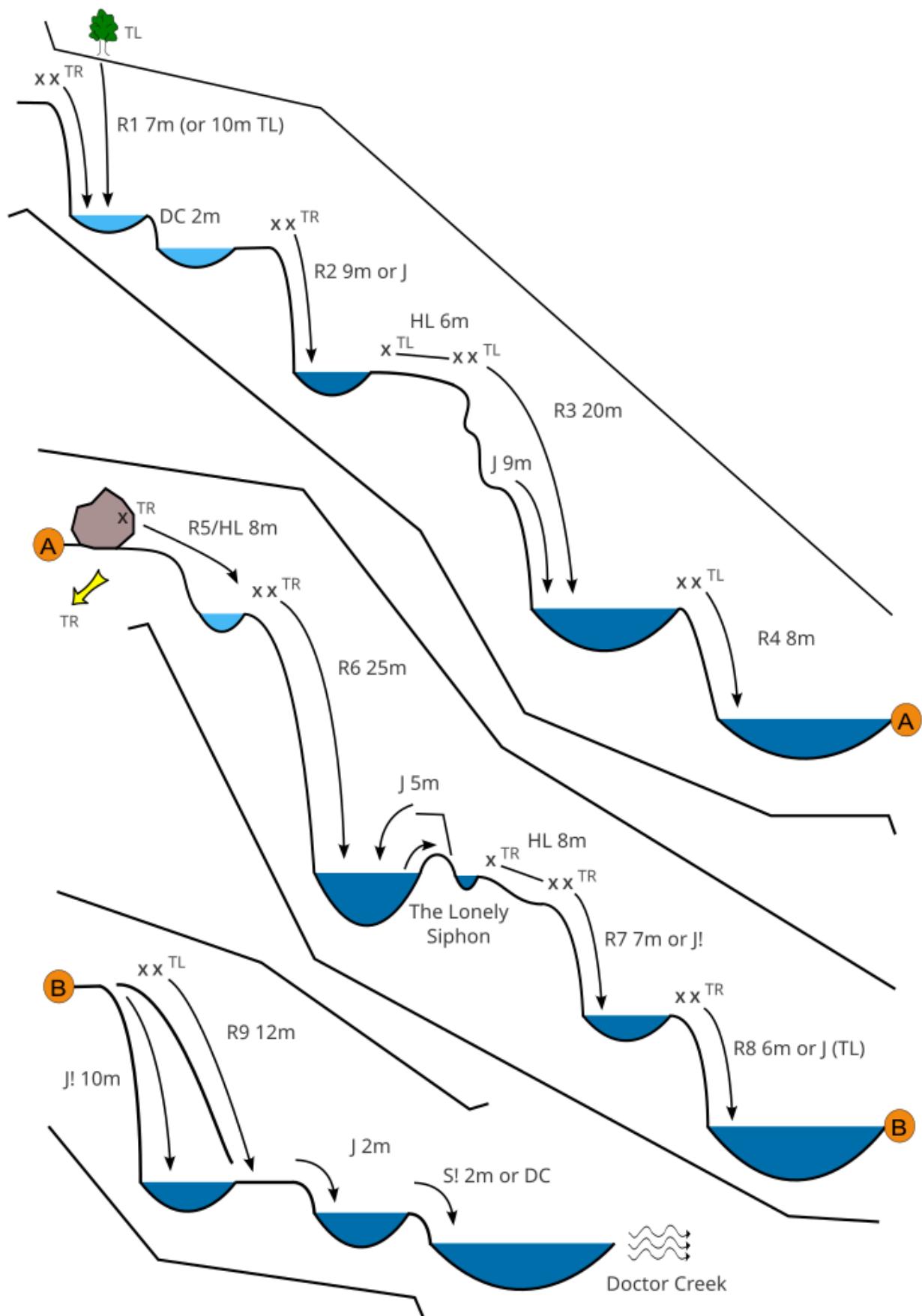
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*Topo by Alex Motyka &*

*Christian Miller*

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"The Lonely Siphon" rock bridge at the end of the R5 pool. All the water flows through a keyhole several metres under the water.



Heli pulling away after dropping off the rest of the team.



Pulling the rope on a small ledge at the bottom of R5



Jumping R2

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End of the canyon / water level check. Low to moderate flow.

R3



R4

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