



PASS CREEK

canyon v2a2III (not a canyon)

Location

Upper Hollyford Valley

Character

Open, bouldery creek bed with short downclimbs only. Obstacles are always avoidable via the sides, except in a short carved section. Not a canyon.

Map

Topo50 CB09 - Hollyford



P.: parking / Red line: approach / ☆: upstream waterfall

Approach by Car

Head towards Milford Sound on SH94. Turn right down the Hollyford valley Road (gravel) and park behind Pass Creek bridge ([here](#)). 1'2h from Te Anau.

Approach on Foot

Walk along the Pass Creek Track to the bridge crossing Pass Creek (approx. -44.815045, 168.138086).

Rock/Geology

Pass Creek initially flows over hard, resistant bedrock, forming the most carved (though small) and aesthetic section of the canyon, as well as the [large waterfall located upstream](#) of the entry bridge. This incision develops while the stream flows over semischist. Once it reaches the geological contact with more erodible sedimentary rocks, the valley profile changes and the gradient steepens.

On the true right bank, semischists of the Harris Saddle Formation (Caples Terrane) crop out. These rocks derive from ancient Permian–Triassic marine sediments that were partially metamorphosed. They are compact, dark grey to greenish in colour, relatively homogeneous, and resistant to erosion.

The true left bank is composed of sedimentary rocks of the Maitai Group: Wooded Peak Limestone (grey limestone and sandy limestone) and Tramway Sandstone (grey-green fossiliferous sandstones containing shell fragments and volcanic material). These rocks are less resistant and well stratified, promoting increased erosion, widening of the valley into a V-shaped profile and the appearance of short drops associated with boulder chaos after crossing the lithological contact.

Rockfalls are more frequent on the true left, which is also the steeper side, where inclined bedding creates planes of weakness that favour gravity-driven failures and fallen blocks in the channel. This lithological contrast controls the canyon morphology and affects progression safety.

Water

Good water level (visited after several days of rain). Always avoidable except in the "slightly carved section", with two short mandatory "belly flop" jumps.

Catchment

≈2,1 km² (Highest point of the catchment: 1777m asl)

Anchors

(None)

Gear

No ropes (a short rope may be helpful for a downclimb). Wetsuit.

Route Description

Not a canyon. Walk along the creek bed until reaching the bedrock section, where the only canyon features of this creek are found: a small but nice gorge with a few mandatory jumps. A couple of bends follow, then a long, continuous downclimb leads to the base (end of the boulder section and start of the alluvial river). From there, continue hiking down the creek to the car.

Description from the bridge to the end of the small gorge: bridge, walk, DC (TR), walk (open), start of small gorge, DC (TR, out of the water), J, nice tributary TL, DC/J, nice tributary TR, end of small gorge.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	1h40min
Canyon descent	3-4h
Return to vehicle	0min
Total	5-6h

Flash Flood Danger

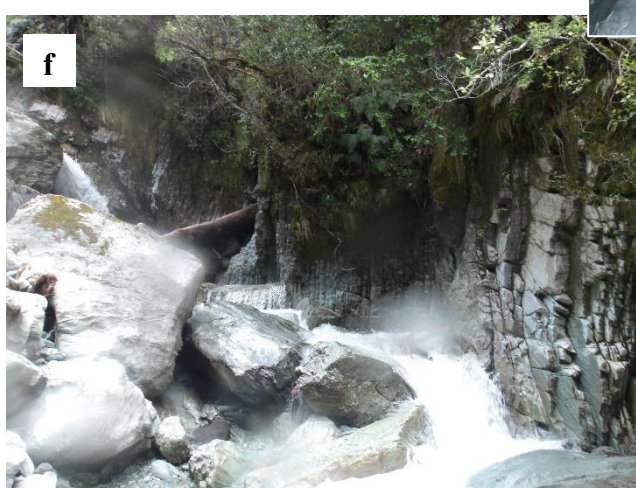
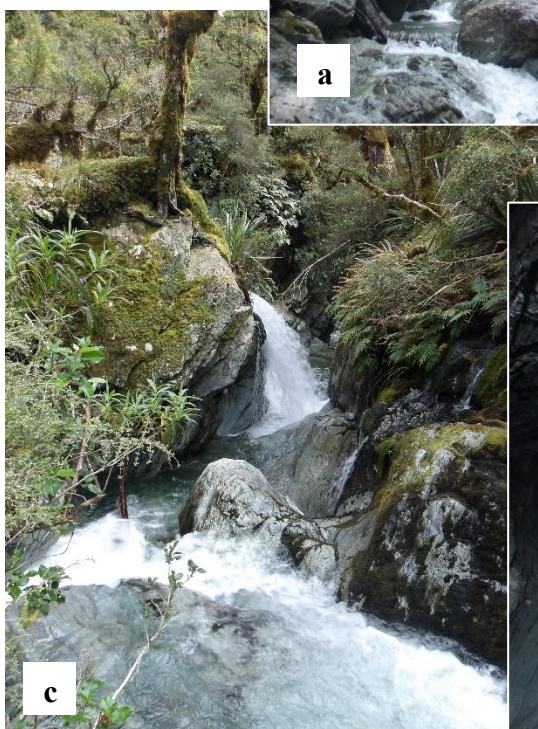
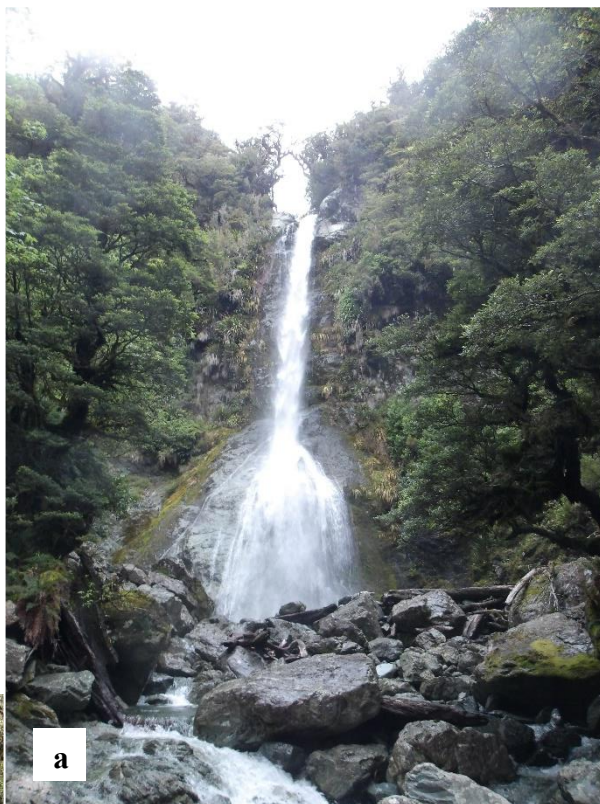
Low due to the open channel morphology, but rockfall hazard during or after rainfall (water saturates softer materials, increasing their weight and likelihood of failure).

Escapes

Via the true left: tedious or very difficult once entering the more constricted valley. Via the true right: almost always feasible (apparently), but with a much longer return.

Notes

First descent: Alain Rohr and company.
Fun to effort ratio: don't bother.



- Large waterfall upstream of the entry bridge.
- Before the first DC.
- Second DC and jump under tributary waterfall.
- Cool shower.
- Unlucky guy
- Vertical stratification further downstream.

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Topo by JoseJPJ
www.kiwicanyons.org

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