



WAKEFIELD CANYON

canyon v4a2IV ★★

Location

Mt Cook; overlooking the Tasman glacier terminal lake.

Character

A stunning & vertical 14 pitch canyon with no more than 20 meters horizontal between each pitch head. 3 stars but for the involved approach. Marked as Wakefield Falls (230m) on the topo map. The impressive falls & cliffs as seen from the road - hide so much more height and interest once on the mountain and inside the canyon.

Map

BX15 Fox Glacier



Approach by Car

10 minutes from Mt Cook village. Park in a layby approximately 0.5km before the Blue Lakes car park.

Approach on Foot

An easy walk up the Wakefield creek brings you to a little lookout point and picture plaque. (15mins)

On the other side of the creek a scree fan is taken to its natural top and the bottom of "cannon ball alley". (45 mins)

"Cannon ball alley" is a steep & loose gut which is climbed for ~120m over several rock steps. Two single bolt anchors in the lower half allow for a fixed rope to be set by the first person up. (30 mins)

A cairn on the climbers right of the alley marks where to exit and begin a 300m traverse across a Matagouri covered slope to the canyon rim. (30 mins)

Follow the canyon rim up the hillside (soon picking up a deer trail) until the slope begins to level out into an alpine meadow. A cairn on the rim marks the access boulder at about the 1,220m contour. (30 mins)

Rock

Greywacke, generally good quality with a few exceptions.

Water

Moderate flow in a late dry summer.

Warning!! The canyon is graded as it was found late on in a dry summer (March 2021). The canyon clearly takes substantial volumes of water very regularly. Many pools if flushed out and with a bit more water would generate hydraulic hazards.

Catchment

2.75 km²

Anchors

Double Bolt Anchors in the majority with a couple of single bolt anchors & one sling with ring through a boulder pinch.

Warning!! There is much evidence of significantly high flow in this canyon. As such the anchors are generally found well above the safe flow level, often involving an exposed climb to access them. It is still recommended that future teams bring with them the ability to build new anchors should the existing ones get taken out.

Gear

Longest drop 80m (minimum 3no 80m ropes recommended)

Route Description

R1 gains access to the stream from the canyon rim, landing you immediately above the start of R2. There is a little slide as a bit of fun to access R2 or alternatively traverse the rock ramp on the TR to gain R2's anchor.

R2 to R6 come in quick succession and are in a generally open section of streamway which belies what is to come.

R7 (45m) immediately followed by R8 (10m) offers a little taster of what is to come.

R8 (75m) is the first of the big pitches, open and inviting at it's top, it descends into a canyon of cathedral like proportions. R7's anchor is high up and far out on the TR, particularly exposed to reach.

From the base of R9, the canyon walls rise steeply all around you, the streamway is broad through R10, R11 and R12 – however the canyons proportions and towering walls create a sense of being small and isolated.

The sky briefly opens at the top of R13 (80m) where an exposed down climb reaches the anchor on the TL. R13 drops into a one-of-a-kind pool which pours over R14. To gain the anchor to R14 cross the pool and climb the opposite wall vertically for 3m to gain a ledge where the anchor is located low down on the TL.

From the base of R14 down climb and boulder hop back down the streamway until you can retrace your approach back to the car.

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	2hrs 30min
Canyon descent	4hrs
Return to vehicle	30h
Total	7hrs

Flash Flood Danger

Moderate to High

Escapes

Between R1 and R6 one can easily get out of the canyon stream way on the true right and possibly back to the canyon rim with some steep scrambling (untried). Once down R7 you are committed to completing the canyon descent. There is the occasional spot one could climb above the high-water mark; however, it is unlikely you would be able to escape the canyon itself.


Notes

First descent: 13 March 2021 (Ant Alford, Jonathan Carr, Hamish Castle, Justin Hall)

Fun to effort ratio: If you like lots of back to back rappels which just get bigger and bigger with the views to boot & a pub 45 minutes from the last rappel - then this is the canyon for you!! 3 stars but for the 2.5hr walk in and cannon ball alley which could improve with use.

Access issues: Public land.

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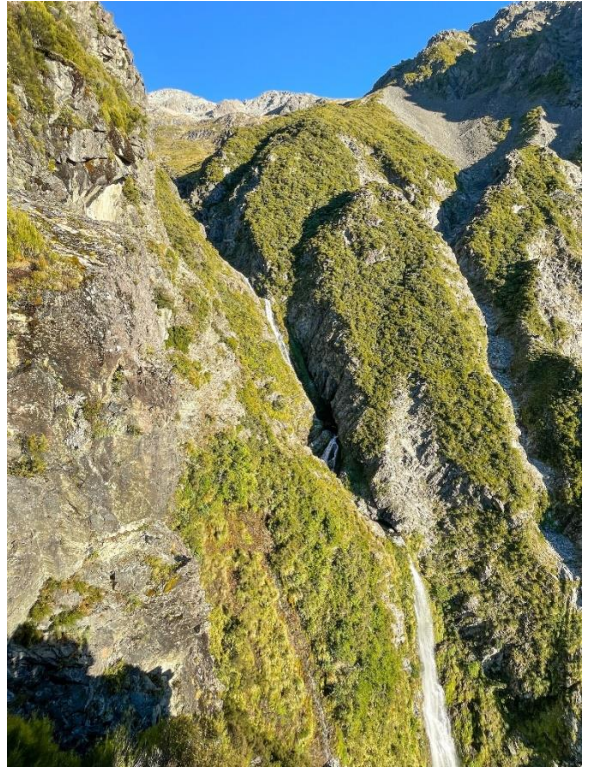

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Topo by Justin Hall
www.kiwicanyons.org

Photos



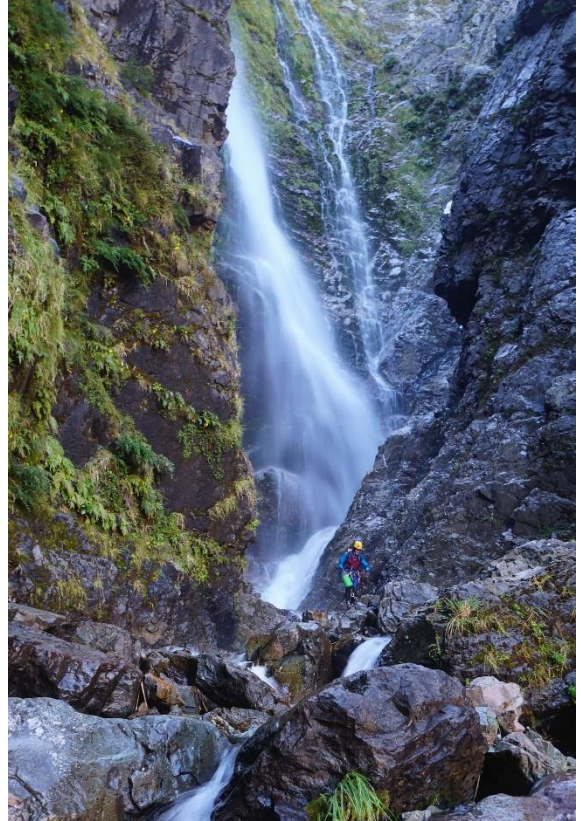
The open upper section, indicative of R1 to R6



R7, R8 and top half of R9

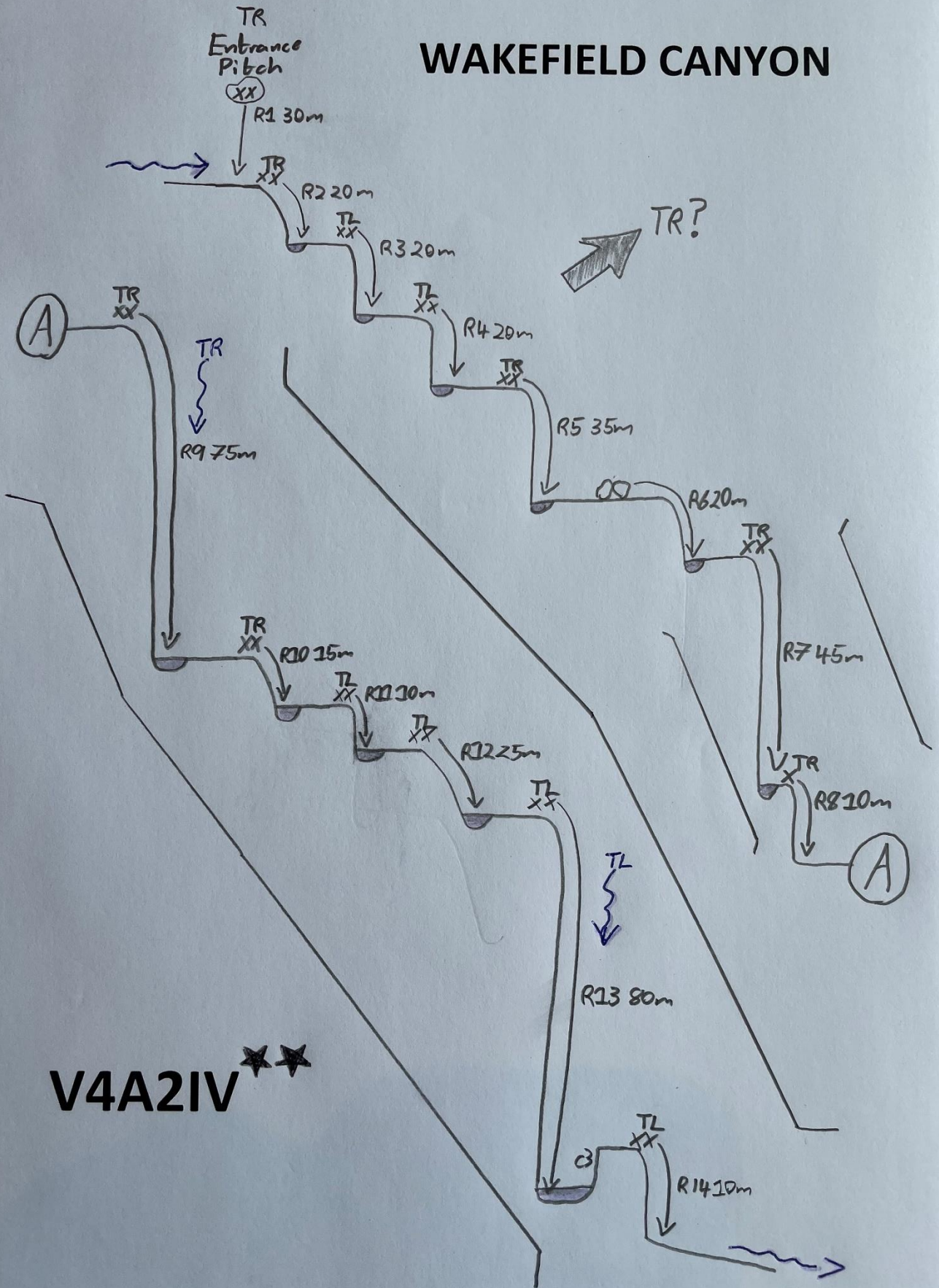


R9 & R12 (R10 & R11 hidden by photo angle)



Bottom of R13 and top of R14 (pool & climb hidden)

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