

Guidelines for Canyon Leaders

Canyoning is an outdoor adventure activity that typically involves bushwalking, swimming, wading, abseiling, and rock scrambling techniques in order to negotiate a diverse range of river and creek systems. As with all club activities, safety of participants is of paramount importance.

Guidance for Leaders is provided in the following UBMBC documents:

- Guidelines for Canyoners
- Guidelines for Walkers
- Guidelines for Walk Leaders
- Guidelines for Canyon Leaders.

Processes for Trip Proposal and Acceptance

Trip leaders who have been approved by the subcommittees may submit canyoning trips to the UBMBC walks secretary. The activities page on the club website requires leaders to complete details of the trip. These include date, activity grade, leader, Assistant leader, contact details, number of participants and map. The trip is subject to approval by the walks secretary.

Once the trip is approved by the walks secretary, the leader may inform club members by email to Canyons_abseiling_ubmbc@googlegroups.com google group. Members who are approved to participate in the canyon may contact the leader to request participation. The leader will consider the composition of the group in deciding who joins the trip. The leader then informs participants, providing meeting details, travel arrangements and any additional information.

Before leading a canyon

1. Check if abseiling is allowed in the chosen area and if the canyon route crosses into private property.
2. Assess risks as outlined in the UBMBC Risk Management Guidance document.
3. If necessary, conduct a reconnaissance trip.
4. Be familiar with the UBMBC Emergency Response Process document.
5. Be familiar with UBMBC Canyon Activity Grading document.
6. Canyoning groups will have a limit of 8 participants. A second group will not be run in the same canyon on the same day.
7. Identify potential exit routes that could be used if there is an emergency.
8. Check that all canyoners have at least the minimum skill level required for the canyon activity.
9. Adhere to [participant limits and guidelines](#) as established by NPWS.
10. The group should consist of members with suitable skill and experience to run a trip safely. The safety ratio of experienced to less experienced should be taken into account. Identify the grade, skills of individual members and designate roles to those who are suited to assist with leading, last person down, second last person down, anchor/pitch manager, who will be at the front of the group, who is at the back of the group for the approach and exit.
11. Prior to approval, check participants are financial members, have signed the canyon waiver, and are approved for technical canyoning. Check participants for the grade, skills and competency required to complete the activity. (A list of current canyoning members and their grade is regularly updated and distributed to leaders)

12. The leader always has the discretion to approve or disapprove of any member joining a canyon activity if he/she has concerns about competency or suitability.
13. Consider what is the minimum number of participants required for the trip to be safely run. Cancel or change the trip if there are less than 3 participants.
14. Ensure that the group is carrying at least the minimum group equipment (see list below).
15. Ensure there is sufficient rope for the trip, including for the use of access lines for exposed edges or approaching anchors.
16. Check for park, road and area closures through NPWS, State or local government. National Parks, council area and roads [NPWS Alerts webpage](#), [bmcc](#), [Live Traffic](#), [RFS fires near me](#) etc
17. Email trip information to the participants.
18. The day before the activity email late-returns-ubmbc@googlegroups.com with the participant names. If the activity is delayed, the committee is then able to answer enquiries. Make sure an emergency contact person (ideally a UBMBC committee member or canyoner) is aware of the route you are taking, details of the canyon activity and is available on the day/s of the activity. An updated email should be sent to late returns if there are any changes to the activity or participants.
19. If carrying a PLB rather than InReach or other satellite communication device, ensure trip description and emergency contacts are updated through the AMSA website.
20. Provide trip details to your emergency contact/s.
21. Monitor the weather up to two weeks prior to the planned canyon activity. Heavy rain or thunderstorms may increase the risk of flash flooding. If the soil is already saturated then rain during the activity will result in increased runoff. Also consider the size of the catchment. Catchment sizes for many canyons are given on [OzUltimate.com](#). Also consider the type of surface of the catchment area. Hard surfaces such as roads and residential areas absorb little water and water can enter the canyon in a shorter time and in higher volumes than compared to wilderness canyons during flash flooding.
22. Consider if recent rainfall may have increased the water level, altered the conditions and made the canyon more difficult. There may be waterlogged entry and exit tracks, unstable surfaces, landslides or fallen trees.

On the day of the canyon

1. Either cancel or have a contingency plan to do a similar activity should the conditions cause concern. If activity plans change, notify Late Returns and emergency contact if possible.
2. Brief the participants on: planned route, duration, possible exposure, specific landmarks and potential hazards.
3. Monitor the weather on the day.
4. Where possible appoint a suitably experienced assistant leader.
5. Discuss with the team, roles and the importance of teamwork and introduce the assistant leader to the group.
6. Where a leader should be positioned within the group depends on the experience level of the group, familiarity with the canyon, the safety ratio and what the leader decides. Ideally the leader should be positioned at the front of the group.
7. Confirm communication methods with the group e.g. verbal, whistle or hand signals. Confirm communication method again just before long distances or operating out of sight.
8. Be aware of the communication ability of members from non-English speaking backgrounds. Check that communications are understood.

9. Check participants have at least an approved helmet, harness, personal safety lanyard and any essential equipment before leaving the cars.
10. Check if any additional equipment is carried by group members that can be used if required.
11. Plan for an early exit contingency, should conditions deteriorate or prove more challenging than anticipated.
12. Be prepared to initiate an emergency response such as activating a PLB in the event of participants being injured, lost or incapacitated. Inform the group as to what the emergency response plan is.
13. Continue to monitor the fitness of the group – checking for fatigue, injuries, hypothermia and hyperthermia.
14. Strong currents may make swimming, abseiling and rock scrambling more hazardous.
15. Check all anchors before setting up ropes and descending to ensure they are in good condition and have not been adversely affected by UV sunlight, rock fall, flood, fire etc. Check quicklinks/maillons gates are tightly closed. Have sufficient material to build a new anchor if required.
16. Check all ropes and equipment to ensure they are in good condition. It is good practice for the last person down to carry a backup rope and be capable of performing rescues.
17. Explain the route for each abseil and any potential hazards.
18. When throwing rope down, if the rope cannot be sighted on the ground, then knot the ends of the rope/s. This may not be practical in all situations, such as white water. Consider using a releasable anchor.
19. The leader should either be or appoint a pitch or anchor manager to check those getting on the rope at the pitch head. Usually this would be the pitch rigger or last person down. This person is also usually best located to perform rescues if something were to happen and so should be suitably experienced.
20. Use a bottom or top belay when it is suitable and safe to do so. Belayers should concentrate on the task at hand. Where appropriate self belay can also be used.
21. Canyoners should stand clear of the area below the abseil to avoid being hit by falling rocks and debris.
22. Pools should be checked for depth, submerged debris and other hazards prior to abseiling into deep-water or jumping into a pool. Where possible the first person should descend by rope or climbing down and check the pool is clear before others jump. If a submerged danger is present the first person down will indicate where it is safe to jump.
23. Advanced Canyoners (Level 5) may rig. Rigging includes setting up anchors, attaching ropes to anchors, traverse lines, top belay and guided abseils. Working towards Advanced Canyoners (Level 4) may rig if supervised by an Advanced Canyoners (Level 5). Canyoners who do not have rigging experience cannot rig or check rigging.
24. Buddy checks should be done - ABCDE checks are done aloud by the person about to abseil. The person next in line to abseil also checks the abseiler.
25. The first person abseiling is advised to use a VT prusik (self-belay), French Prusik (autoblock) or be top belayed (depending on conditions).

After the Canyon

1. Check that all participants have returned safely.
2. Conduct a debrief where participants have the opportunity to provide feedback on the activity.
3. Check equipment that was shared during the activity is returned to the owner. e.g. carabiners, ropes, rope bags etc.
4. Check all cars start before driving away.
5. Reply to the earlier pre-canyon email that you had sent to [late-returns ubmbc@googlegroups.com](mailto:ubmbc@googlegroups.com) to inform the club committee:
 - a. That the group has finished the canyon.
 - b. If there were any changes to participants or if the activity was cancelled.
 - c. If there was a near miss or incident on the activity, complete an incident form.
6. It is recommended to report new hazards observed on the OZultimate.com [canyon conditions](#) webpage or RopeWiki.
7. It is recommended to clean all ropes, check for damage, measure and mark rope lengths so they are ready for the next trip.

Leader Equipment

The leader should have at least one of each of the following items in addition to the personal items required for canyoning.

Minimum		Optional
Additional descender	Fire lighting equipment	USB Battery (charge phone)
PLB or Satellite communicator eg InReach	Maillons	GPS
Compass	Mobile phone (offline map/gpx recommended)	Emergency Shelter/bothy bag
Map	Slings (anchor building material)	
Adjustable wrench (for maillons)	Additional Carabiners	
Basic rescue equipment		

Group Equipment

Minimum	Optional
Rope/s	UHF Radios
Backup rope	Rope Bags

Ropes

- Sufficient ropes so that if ropes become stuck on one of the abseil pitches and are not able to be retrieved progression through the canyon is possible with the spare rope/s (this does not include the backup/rescue rope).
- Take into account rope shrinkage, changes in anchor position and discrepancies in reported abseil pitch lengths.

Canyon Leaders

Leaders are experienced technical (abseiling) canyoners with advanced abseiling skills.

They should also have good interpersonal skills to develop teamwork and cohesion within the group. They should try to utilise members' expertise to enhance group performance and be proficient in managing group participation, logistics, risk assessment and unanticipated problems that may arise during the canyon.

It is also acknowledged that qualities such as sound judgement, compassion and fairness are vital for canyon leaders but are less easily measured than skills, knowledge and experience