

What Gear do I need for Canyoning in New Zealand's Conditions?

Rope:

Certified/rated Semi-static, made for canyoning. 8.5mm - 10mm. Start canyoning with a robust 10mm rope like Kordas Dana 10. It handles well, is tough and has great knotability. Used throughout Europe and New Zealand for good reason.

Canyoning ropes are generally semi static, and come with a certification EN1891.

Certified means consistency of materials, with ongoing quality control. The US tends to use thin static rope, due to a history of mainly dry canyoneering (not an always!) The US has its own certifications, or none at all, for rope.

So, why use semi static for NZ canyons? As an example, imagine getting smashed in powerful white water, with a little bit of slack, on a truly static rope. The shock load on you and the anchor would be much higher than that of a semi static rope. With around 3% stretch, a semi static rope is a little forgiving. The shock load is absorbed through the rope, not your body, or the anchor (my personal experience has proved this to be true). Absorbing this shock load through your pelvis, would be extremely painful with a truly static rope. As ever, it is horses for courses, nothing is 100%. Having an array of options is the way to go, depending on what you are doing of course.....



Harnesses:

Certified/rated and even dated. Made for canyoning, like AV Mazerin for instance. These work with the addition of a central D karabiner. Other harnesses come with a loop at the front for attaching directly. Look for genuine certified harnesses - 'meets the standard' etc means little. Read between the lines - there has been solid testing of equipment through years of work by many knowledgeable people, this is constantly evolving. Be aware of what you are buying.



Descenders:

Basic figure eights work very well, or buy a more fancy descender with horns (the bits that stick out). Be aware that most EN1891 ropes work well in conjunction with standard figure eights, but you need to fully understand their uses on thinner ropes. 8.5 - 9mm for instance, can be surprisingly fast when new.



Quality canyoning gear available through www.accessgear.net your Canyoning/Caving store.

Cows tails/Lanyards:

Dynamic Certified Rope has been well tested for this purpose, it has great benefits over static sewn cows tails, due to the dynamic properties of the rope. Replace rope when worn, it costs so little. Personally, I much prefer screw gate carabiners on cow's tails, this way it gives me a choice.
9.8mm (Kordas Kloe)

**Carabiners:**

HMS, D or Oval.

Actually HMS will do everything you need it to - within reason of course!

HMS carabiners can be used for belaying, canyon quickdraws, or even pulleys. D shapes for rigging/cowstails etc. Oval shaped would be best for pulleys, but not strictly necessary these days.

**Canyoning Packs:**

For over 12 years, Access Gear has supplied NZ canyoningers with high quality packs for their watery pursuits. We are at the cutting edge of production - high quality, niche products, designed and made in New Zealand. Real world use is of the utmost importance to us. The Extreme 2 Canyon Pack is a leap forward, but also builds upon what we have done in the past. Produced through two weeks of hard work over winter, it's light in weight and hard core, with massive drainage.

Access Gear has a unique approach to design, and gives specific attention to detail. 20 years of canyoning experience helps in the design new products, as does feedback from our customers. We want our products to endure.

**Webbing:**

Certified UIAA - rated and quality controlled by an independent testing authority ie. the UIAA.

Non rated brands, with no history in New Zealand's harsh UV rays, make little sense - it's your life! Leaving poor anchors for others is not appropriate. Invest a little, leave what you would like to see yourself when you arrive at an anchor station.

Maintain any old (looking) webbing by taking some NEW webbing with you. Staying in touch with the community via the groups you use, will ensure up to date local information:- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/449524435108913/> Use Stainless Steel rings in conjunction with webbing. <https://www.accessgear.net/products-page/bolts-and-hangers/round-stainless-steel-ring-o10mm/>



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Shoes:

After testing every canyon shoe on the market, and trashing many poor build quality 5:10 cannoneers - 6 x pairs to be exact, I believe the best shoe on the market is still the Adidas Hydro pro. These do the job very well - the grip is ok, they last well, and fit well. Bestards build quality is great, but they killed my feet, causing tendonitis - this was my personal experience. I gave up on them for canyoning. I once used my Merrell (brand) shoes, when I forgot to bring my 5:10's - they were surprisingly good. I am sure most well made track style shoes will work at a pinch.

For interest - the initial 5:10's made in California were great, after that the quality went backwards. These are no longer made, Adidas bought 5:10 a few years ago.

Wetsuits:

My personal favourite up until now, has been a Seventh Wave wetsuit. They make custom suits, but these are expensive. I am experimenting with some other brands that offer flexibility and warmth, another vital factor.

I like to be able to move around in a wetsuit, if it is too thick it can become restrictive.

If you like to bounce your way down the canyon walls, there is so much choice of thicker, perhaps restrictive (5mm+) wetsuits. Happy to advice where to purchase wetsuits in NZ, we have manufacturers. Just ask.

Helmets:

Most helmets nowadays only last a couple of years, due to the polystyrene inner lining. The safety of these is better than older style hard shell helmets, but we throw them away more regularly now :-)



Other gear includes a whistle, a knife, ascenders (which can double for a haul system), a VT prussik, pulley's, emergency equipment, PLB, extra clothing, maps, GPS etc - and don't forget your lunch ;-)

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