

Operational Procedures - Gorge Walking

Description of Activity

Gorge walking involves the group in walking/scrambling up a local stream (Ballaglass Glen) negotiating the natural rock and water features encountered on the way. The session lasts approx. 60 – 90 minutes in the water and is a good medium for developing group dynamics and responsibility for other group members.

Staff Qualifications

The instructor running this session should hold a valid first aid certificate and a water based lifesaving award (RLSS Bronze Medallion, Canoe safety test, beach/surf lifeguard) and have attended a staff training session based on this activity.

They should have observed and assisted on at least two sessions before being observed running a session by a Manager or Senior Instructor.

The assistant should have undergone a staff training session on this activity.

Staff Ratio

1 instructor plus assistant for every 10 clients

Equipment

Buoyancy Aids - min 50 N spec (To be tested as required for all water sports)

Helmets - BCU approved kayaking helmets – climbing helmets should not be worn for this activity.

Wet suits though not essential are normally worn

1 short rope to assist on obstacles.

As with all off site activities a first aid kit must be taken and be available close to the activity

Not required if access to hut in Ballaglass is available

1 x bivy shelter appropriate size for group.

Mobile phone

Sample Programme

- Explain the implications of the activity to the clients.
- Issue kit and ensure clients wear suitable footwear and bring spare clothing.
- Assess the group for swimming ability and water confidence.
- Travel to Ballaglass Glen (by tram or minibus as appropriate to group).
- 1 instructor should take car for spare kit and for use on emergency.
- The group should walk along the path down stream to check the section of the river which is to be used and to point out features of relevance to the group it also gives the instructor an opportunity to assess water levels. ***If the instructor is in any doubt about the safety of the activity for example when the river level is too high the activity must be abandoned or the small stream adjacent to the car park may be used as an alternative.***
- At the start of the activity the instructor should check the clients clothing and safety equipment.

- Participants should be encouraged to remain in the riverbed where the rocks are less slippery and least environmental damage can be caused.
- The group must remain close together at all times. The success of the activity relies on the participants working together as a tight group helping each other over obstacles. The role of the instructor and assistant is to ensure the safety of the group and demonstrate appropriate techniques to overcome the obstacles. They are not there to carry people up a river or lift the entire group up each waterfall etc.

At the end of the session debrief the group and note any points of importance in the daybook.

Safety Considerations.

- Work within the ability of the group (miss sections out if they are too difficult).
- Try to keep the group moving avoid spending long periods of time at one location if the group are not involved in an activity.
- Be aware of the smaller members of the group who tend to suffer from cold in silence.
- Cover all open wounds
- Avoid areas of stagnant water

Specific known risks

- Be aware that metal rods are located in the middle of the waterfall at the start of the gorge walk to the rear of the small cottage
- When getting out of the gully under the bridge the rocks are very slippery and the bank/path is unstable in places either proceed up river directly to right of waterfall keeping well to the right or climb over fence at bridge and walk up river to get in again

Risk assessment Gorge walking 18/11/08

Hazard	Who might be harmed	Severity	Control Measure	Likelihood	Risk Factor	Further action
Extremes of cold	All participants	M	Group should wear appropriate clothing - in all but the hottest weather this is a wet suit. Group to be observed throughout the session. Stop session if group are complaining of cold. Instructor must be first aid qualified to include dealing with hypothermia. Spare warm clothing and drink to be available.	3	M3	
Slipping on rocks	All participants	L	Suggest remaining in river where the rocks are less slippery. Instructor to lead suitable route. Suitable footwear should be worn i.e. trainers or boots, not plastic sandals or wet suit boots . Spare trainers are available at the park or Venture centre if persons do not bring their own. Water Sport Helmets to be worn throughout this activity kayak style with protection over ears – NOT climbing helmets.	2	L2	
Flash Flooding	All participants	H	Weather forecast should be obtained before activity - oncoming heavy rain may result in a rapid increase in water level. Advice should be sought from Simon or Michael Read before continuing with the activity.	3	M3	Mark on rock as guide – check with MR or SR for location. Use ledge by waterfall as guide for this
Weils Disease	All participants	H	If persons have open wounds cover the wounds up or advise them not to participate in the activity. Avoid drinking the water. Avoid areas of stagnant water. Shower after this activity.	4	H4	
Falling branches	Any body		In extreme wind conditions this should be considered and where necessary the activity abandoned	2	H2	
Drowning	All participants	H	Appropriate buoyancy aids to be worn at all times during this activity normally this is 50N specification	4	H4	
Entrapment from rock falls, changed obstacles in river bed, slipping, snagging on sunken items e.g. steel girders, tree trunks etc.	All participants	H	Instructor to carry out a <u>dynamic risk assessment</u> on obstacles and to check for changes in river bed prior to demonstrating any specific manoeuvre. Any obstacle that cannot be rendered safe should be avoided either by moving round or by retreat. The instructor should where necessary stay between the obstacle and group members.	2	H2	
Loose rock holds	All participants	M	Instructor to point out and test holds where these are necessary for any specific manoeuvre	2	M2	

Level of severity with current control measures: H = High severity Risk of death , M = Medium severity Risk of major injury (e.g. reportable under RIDDOR)

Gorge operating procedures were updated by Pete Stacey, MIA Technical Adviser to the Venture Centre 17/04/2010.updated 9/3/12 PST.

L = Low severity Risk of minor injury (e.g. not reportable under RIDDOR)

Likelihood with current control measures: 1 = Extremely likely; 2 = Likely; 3 = Unlikely; 4 = Remote possibility

e.g. Risk factor H1 = extremely high risk of death, Risk factor L4 = remote possibility of minor injury.