

Activity Guidelines

Risk-Assessment

Risk-Benefit Analysis

January 2025

Canyoning / Gorge Walking

Intrepidus Outdoors / MY Adventure

Audience

This document has been produced for practitioners within the field of Adventure Tourism / Outdoor Education who have a depth and breadth of knowledge regarding: group management, risk management and technical aspects of adventurous activities. While this document may be of relevance to individuals who fall outside the scope of the intended audience, it is vital to emphasise those perceptions concerning: guidelines, terminology and exposure to risk may be incorrectly interpreted due to different expertise.

Overview

This document has **three** objectives:

- To manage the potential risk to practitioners, participants, equipment, bystanders and the environment by presenting a reductionist risk assessment which take into consideration the impact of risk, while demonstrating that proportions have been made to reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring
- Enable practitioners to operate within a set of predetermined guidelines in order to achieve tourism, educational and developmental objectives
- Highlight the educational and developmental benefits that exposure to carefully managed risk will foster

Further information

This document was updated by Ross Brinson (updates on the 10/01/2025)

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Guidelines for Canyoning / Gorge Walking [C-G1]

This documents aims to set out the guidelines, for practitioners delivering Canyoning / Gorge Walking for the purpose of educational programming and adventure tourism.

Description of the programmes

Canyoning (Canyoneering) is one of the UK's fastest growing adventure tourism activities. It involves waterfall abseils, cliff jumps and natural waterslides. Knowledge of rope work, hydrology and group management is paramount to safe and high quality Canyoning.

Gorge walking is a less vertical version of Canyoning often in wider river gorge.

Objectives of the programme

We are committed to delivering high quality Adventure Tourism / Outdoor Education programmes. The programmes that we deliver have a broad range of outcomes which include: tourism provision, outdoor learning, skills acquisition, obtaining cross-curricular links, vocational development, environmental education, interpersonal and intrapersonal development, as well as contributing towards the health and wellbeing of participants. The objectives of each programme are unique and tailored to the needs / expectations of those individuals / stakeholders.

Minimum Qualifications

UK Canyon Association – L1 Guide, 16hr Outdoor first aid course

Or

In House Sign off

Maximum Ratio

1 : 8 / 2:20

Note:

- The Technical Advisor may also give staff written authorisation to run a gorge activity without the stated qualifications if they are happy that the staff are sufficiently competent to lead it.

Responsibilities of practitioner

- Practitioners must only operate within the remit of their AALA licence

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- Practitioners must only operate within their insurance
- Practitioners must understand and implement the reductionist risk assessments attached to this document
- Practitioners must execute dynamic risk assessments alongside the reductionist risk assessments in order to manage any unforeseen risks
- Practitioners must ensure equipment is in a safe working order
- Practitioners must carry appropriate safety equipment (e.g. group shelter, first aid kit, mobile phone etc)
- Practitioners must ensure that they possess consent forms for participants under the age of 18
- Practitioners must ensure that they possess declaration forms for participants over the age of 18
- Practitioners must ensure that they possess medical declaration forms for all participants
- Practitioners must be aware and understand any participant's medical conditions that may jeopardise any aspects of the programme
- In event of an emergency follow the practitioner emergency procedures

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Generic Risk Assessments for Canyoning programmes

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Likely hood	Control Measures
Equipment	Equipment failure	H	L	Equipment is regularly maintained, serviced and where required tested to current specifications.
	Unsuitability	M	L	All equipment meets current specifications and/or accepted standards where applicable and is suitable for its intended use.
	Damaged	L	L	Practitioners carry appropriate repair kit or spares for the activity.
	Wrongly fitted	M	L	Practitioners check equipment at time of issue.
Activity	Slips & Trips	H	M	Practitioners briefs the group as to hazards / Equip group with appropriate PPE (Helmets) and brief regarding holding of the paddle and its correct use.
	Falls	H	L	Practitioner will manage locations where a fall is possible in an appropriate manner (top rope / spotting)
	Drowning	H	L	Wear appropriate PPE (buoyancy aid) and ensure weak or non-swimmers are closely supervised.
	Banging Head	M	M	Helmets must be worn
	Falling Rocks	M	M	Helmets worn at all times / Practitioner manages group
	Large Swell	M	L	Practitioner will avoid large impact zones
	Waterborne disease	H	L	Avoid high-risk waterways. Avoid rivers immediately after flooding. Wash hands before lunch.
	Foot entrapments walking/abseiling	H	M	Route choice / Guided abseil
	Flash Flood	H	L	Checking weather conditions
Participants	Behaviour	M	M	Participants are treated with respect
				Participants attend through choice
Bystanders	Collision	M	M	Instructor manages the group appropriately
	Stranger Danger	M	M	Instructor manages the group appropriately
Access	Access	L	L	Practitioner will plan the route to avoid access issues - Both entrance and exit locations will be planned.
	Environment	M	L	Group to be briefed regarding code of conduct in wild and rural places. Including dropping

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	Livestock / Wildlife	M	L	of litter Only where absolutely necessary will livestock is encountered Instructor will advise group of best approach.
	Roads / Tracks	M	L	Practitioner to supervise any crossings and avoid where possible.
Weather Conditions	General	M	L	Practitioner obtains information regarding weather/tides and makes an assessment based on the activity and location.
	Cold & Wind	M	L	Practitioners will ensure that each participant is appropriately clothed, carries sufficient food and that additional food, clothing, and equipment is available to suit the expected conditions and nature of the activity.
	Hypothermia	M	L	Practitioners will ensure that each participant is appropriately clothed, carries sufficient food and that additional food, clothing, and equipment is available to suit the expected conditions and nature of the activity.
	Hyperthermia	M	L	Practitioner will modify or curtail the activity if prevailing conditions are inappropriate for the group or the planned activity.
	Sunburn	M	L	Practitioner is first aid trained to the level required by the NGB for the activity.
	Dehydration	M	L	Educate need for water intake and evaluate regularly.

Risk-Benefit Analysis for Canyoning programmes

This documents aims to demonstrate the dangers that are inherent to Adventure Tourism / Outdoor Education programmes are firstly managed, and secondly significantly outweighed by the potential benefits to participants.

Benefit	Danger	Control Measures
Skills acquisition (e.g. technical skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities Negative impact on participants confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Vocational development (e.g. qualifications, accreditation, experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities Failure of participants not achieve the required standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Environmental education (e.g. geography, geology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Intrapersonal development (e.g. self esteem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities Negative impact on participants due to exposure to challenge (e.g. self esteem) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Interpersonal development (e.g. communications, empathy, leadership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities Negative impact on participants due to exposure to challenge (e.g. embarrassment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Health and wellbeing (e.g. physical fitness, physical literacy, mental wellbeing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Obtaining cross-curricular links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities Participants losing interest due to similarity with traditional schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Intellectual stimulation (e.g. navigation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner Comprehensive risk assessments
Sense of place (e.g. understanding and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision of a qualified and experienced

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appreciation for local environment)		practitioner • Comprehensive risk assessments
Foster Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner• Comprehensive risk assessments
Fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inherent risk of participation in adventurous activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervision of a qualified and experienced practitioner• Comprehensive risk assessments