



LIVE THE OUTDOORS

SILVERBAND LODGE ACTIVITY PLAN

ABSEILING

This document has been prepared with reference to the Department of Education and Training Victoria 'Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors' and the Australian Adventure Activity Standards. These were accessed online [here](#) and [here](#) at the date of the most recent update.



In consultation with user groups, Silverband Lodge designs and delivers a broad range of experiential learning programs at Silverband Lodge sites and beyond.

From self-led on site activities, to multi-day expeditions, Silverband Lodge staff will assist in program design and delivery for all ages and abilities.

Programs are designed in response to the desired outcomes of each user group and will always be appropriate to the age, skills and experience of attending participants.

Program design will sequence activities to provide the best possible outcome and each activity offered in the program will be conducted in accordance with the following activity plan.

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1. **EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE**

Abseiling is an adventure activity that offers individuals the opportunity to experience mental and physical challenges.

The aims of the Abseiling experience are to;

- Accept and overcome challenge
- Extend personal boundaries
- Care for fellow participants
- Become familiar with the use of safety techniques including safety equipment and harnesses
- Respect individual choices
- Have fun
- Engage in an exciting and exhilarating activity

This activity is not aimed at excellence in skill acquisition but rather improvement in performance.

Definition:

Abseiling (sometimes referred to as rappelling) is an activity in which a person descends a rope in a controlled manner with the use of a friction device or descender. Abseiling may be used to descend a cliff face as part of a rock-climbing program or it may be practised as a separate activity.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE AND METHOD

Abseiling is generally conducted in half day sessions approximately 2-3 hours long; either a morning or afternoon session.

1. Group Leaders must meet with their group at the designated area and time to be transported to the abseiling site either by Silverband Lodge or the school's/group's own transport.
2. On arrival at the site the group will be met by the Abseiling Instructor, 5-10 minutes will be spent briefing the participants about the natural area and rationale of Abseiling as a challenge activity and what the expectations are for participants.
3. Participants will be briefed and fitted with personal equipment – harness, helmet, descending device and gloves. Participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions.
4. The Abseiling Instructor will check each participant's equipment individually before heading to the foot of the rock or cliff.
5. The Abseiling Instructor will brief participants on safety of being in rock environments, appropriate clothing, action to be taken in the event of something falling from the cliff and methods of communication to be used during the activity.
6. All participants will be encouraged to participate to the extent of their own ability. There will be roughly 2hrs to be directly involved in abseiling, taking turns in abseiling and observing. Depending on group size and conditions, participants may receive the opportunity to have multiple abseils
7. Approximately 15 minutes will be allowed at the end of the session for returning equipment, and a brief discussion on participant learning.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Silverband Lodge conducts Abseiling on natural rock faces. All Silverband Lodge Abseiling Instructors have prior knowledge and experience of the local, and surrounding area and are aware of the following information. Silverband Lodge staff have been inducted into sites commensurate with their skills and experience.

ROCK ENVIRONMENTS

The Abseiling Instructor will assess and inspect the designated abseil site and determine the appropriateness of the activity proceeding with regard to weather and other variables. If conditions deem the site unsafe, the activity will be either cancelled or relocated.

LOCATION

Abseiling is conducted at several locations close to Halls Gap;

Location	Distance	Facilities	Bus Accessible	Distance from parking	Mobile Coverage
Delley's Bridge	1km North Halls Gap	No	Yes	500m	Yes
Grand Canyon	5kms from Halls Gap	Yes	Yes	500m	Yes
Watchtower Cliff	3kms North Halls Gap	No	Yes	300m	Yes
Summer Day Valley (<i>Cultural Heritage Permit Required</i>)	55km North Halls Gap	Yes	Yes	700m	Yes
Bundaleer	20km south-west Halls Gap	No	Yes	400m	Yes

These locations are popular abseiling sites and are preferred sites recommended by Parks Victoria. Any permits or notification to management will be made by Silverband Lodge.

These sites have been selected based on the following:

- The soundness of and safe access to anchor points
- Take-off point is easily accessible and enables comfortable decent
- Belay points are higher than take off point
- Rock faces with easy angled slopes
- Safe, flat area below the abseil for people not participating and for easy group management.
- Proximity to facilities and road access

The group's prior experience and current abilities will determine the site selection. Sites are chosen to give participants a chance to learn proper technique and gain confidence. Time spent will vary, depending on group size and prior experience.

COMMUNICATION

In the case of an emergency or extreme weather conditions, these sites provide a high level of access to communications and external assistance. There may be limited telephone service at some sites but instructors will always be able to reach Emergency Services.

In the case of an incident at the abseiling site, the Operations Manager or Silverband Lodge site-based staff will be notified to assist as needed. Silverband Lodge staff will always be contactable via telephone communication and further available for situations requiring a vehicle.

WEATHER

The weather conditions are assessed in preparation for each session and closely monitored throughout the session. Variable weather conditions are possible through all seasons. Abseiling is a weather dependent activity and therefore on days of extreme temperatures, high winds or very wet/cold conditions, the activity will not take place. It will be the responsibility of the Abseiling Instructor to use his/her professional judgment to make this decision.

Days of Total Fire Ban

- On days of Total Fire Ban, all groups will be required to remain onsite.

TRANSPORTATION

In the case that Silverband Lodge will be transporting participants, transportation will adhere to the Silverband Lodge Vehicle Policy.



3. ACTIVITY

STUDENT / PARTICIPANT SKILLS

Regardless of prior experience, an activity briefing will be conducted to provide participants with the following information.

- Identify the role of the instructor.
- Expectation of participants to act responsibly towards other participants, the public, the environment and for safety reasons.
- Appropriate clothing (see below).
- Action to be taken in the event of something falling from the rock or cliff.
- Protection of the natural environment and minimal impact practices.
- A discussion of the nature and rationale of challenge activities.
- Methods of communication to be used during the activity between participants and belayer.
- Sufficient information for participants to act in the case of emergency.

On conclusion of each abseil session a de-brief discussion will be facilitated by the instructor covering the following points:

- How did it feel to overcome the challenge at hand?
- Extending personal comfort zones.
- Respect for others freedom of choice.

Safety Equipment will be explained so that participants understand the importance of correctly fitting their own equipment.

Harnesses: correctly fitted and secured

Helmets: ensure correct fit and placement

Descending Devices: correct use and understanding of how it works.

The Abseiling Instructor will demonstrate and thoroughly explain the correct method for using the descending device and the way in which the entire system works, with specific attention drawn to:

- The correct body posture for safely descending, providing feedback during descent.
- The position of the participants hands in relation to the descending device.
- Show the safety system and explain why two ropes are used.
- Method of belay

EQUIPMENT

All Abseiling Instructors are familiar with the safe use and maintenance of equipment used for Abseiling sessions.

All equipment used is of AAAS standard (or equivalent) and checked;

- Immediately prior to commencing the activity
- Thoroughly each week as part of the maintenance schedule
- And a log of use of equipment is maintained

It is the responsibility of the Abseiling Instructor to

- Check first aid equipment prior to activity
- Check communication equipment prior to activity
- Ensure all required equipment is provided in working order and onsite at activity
- Check the suitability of clothing and equipment used by participants

Helmets & Harnesses

All helmets and harnesses are of AAAS standard (or equivalent). All participants will be supplied with and must wear helmets for whole the session. Observers and photographers must also wear helmets whilst they are on or near the abseiling site.

Belay & Descending devices

AAAS standard (or equivalent) belay devices and figure of eight descenders are used. Leather gloves are supplied for participants use.

System Setup

A minimum of three secure anchors are used for the system. The 'heart' of the abseil system is secured via 3 carabiners with the abseil and protection system located on two separate carabiners, of which two are steel carabiners. Participants are connected into the back-up system with a standard rethreaded figure of 8 knot. The system will use two rope keeping the abseil line and the belay lines independent, allowing for rescues to be easily managed if needed.

All Abseiling Instructors are trained in the technique of facilitating an emergency decent.

FIRST AID KITS

Lead Abseiling Instructors maintain an appropriate First Aid qualification from a recognised training organisation and carry first aid kits at all times.

CLOTHING

While equipment and clothing is weather dependent when participating in the abseiling activity, participants will;

- Wear appropriate clothing
- Wear sturdy shoes at all times
- Remove jewelry
- Tie hair back
- Empty pockets
- Not chew gum

IDENTIFICATION

It is the responsibility of the user group leader to supervise and manage the group effectively ensuring all participants are accounted for at all times.



Helmets, Figure of eight descending devices and leather gloves used for abseiling.

4. PEOPLE

STAFF

A minimum of two staff members must be present for this activity, one with lead responsibility for activity instruction and the other able to assist the instructor.

From time-to-time Abseiling Instructors used by Silverband Lodge are sub-contracted from a local provider. All instructional staff used by Silverband Lodge maintain current Working With Children's Checks as per Accreditation requirements, and relevant contractor records and insurances are kept.

School or User Group Representative

As per DET VIC Guidelines, a registered teacher or group representative must be present at the activity at all times. In the event that a teacher/group representative is not available to be at the abseil site, the activity will be unable to run.

While Abseiling Instructors have the technical knowledge and expertise to instruct the students / participants, the teacher/group leader will have overall responsibility for the safety and welfare of the students/participants. The teacher/group leader will act on the advice of the Abseiling Instructor regarding technical safety issues.

It is the responsibility of the accompanying teacher/group leader to be familiar with this document to ensure they understand activity at hand and their responsibilities.

The Abseiling Instructor places him/herself at the top of the cliff in a position where they can easily offer support and encouragement to the participants.



Participants are offered the opportunity to accept the challenge to extend personal boundaries, try something new and support their peers.

EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

As a minimum all **Lead Abseiling Instructors** will either hold the following units of competency from the Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package July 2019 or demonstrate equivalent experience to:

Lead Single Pitch abseil on Natural Surfaces SISOABN304A

This will ensure Instructors are competent in:

- Leading abseiling in variable conditions.
- Their own ability and fitness to manage the activity.
- Providing support to abseilers.
- Managing groups in outdoor settings.

And have knowledge of:

- The abseiling location being used
- Setting up of secure and efficient top rope and abseil teaching systems
- Rescue skills and techniques
- Site choice in relation to safety, environmental factors and outcomes for the participant
- Abseiling techniques
- Environmental and land-management issues

Responsibility of the Abseiling Instructor

The Abseiling Instructor will also be responsible for the following;

- Instructing the activity in a safe manner
- Monitoring the welfare and fitness of participants
- Ensuring safety procedures are clearly communicated to participants
- Undertake a head count prior to, during and after the activity
- Record near miss incidents and accidents and submit them to Silverband Lodge Director.
- Ensure all documentation has been completed and collated
- Ensure the abseil session is conducted in a safe manner
- Inform Assisting Instructor of their roles in the behavior, supervision and instructions of participants.
- Brief accompanying teacher / assisting instructor of what procedures to follow should the lead instructor become incapacitated for any reason.

Responsibility of Assisting Abseiling Instructor

The assisting instructor of the activity will generally not be required to have the same skill level as the leader. The assisting instructor will carry out tasks as directed by the Abseiling Instructor which may include monitoring the welfare and fitness of participants, assisting the

abseiling instructor, first aid responsibility, the supervision and behavior of participants and adhering to safety instructions.

The assisting instructor may be the teacher/group leader and must:

- Have experience in the activity at the level being offered to students / participants.
- Be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity.
- Have the ability to participate competently in emergency response procedures.
- Be available to confer with the lead activity instructor to establish the emergency response and supervision responsibilities should the lead activity instructor become incapacitated for any reason.

SUPERVISION

Supervision is a critical factor in managing risk in the outdoors. The abseiling sites are suitable for both primary and secondary age participants.

A minimum of two staff must be present for abseiling. One staff member will be required to have the above qualifications as Abseiling Instructor and one Assisting Instructor, who will be either a staff representative of the school / group or another qualified instructor.

The minimum supervision ratio will be:

1:1 per student abseiling

1:11 for participants waiting or in transit

The allocation of staff should be based on:

- age, maturity and gender of students
- ability and experience of students
- individual needs
- group dynamics of the student group
- experience, qualifications and skills of staff
- location conditions.

The group leader is responsible for the supervision strategy that must be endorsed by the school council as part of the excursion approval process. Staff members will supervise students according to that strategy.

The following table shows the minimum staff-to-student allocation that must be used for abseiling activities.

Up to 12 students – 1 active line (up to 11 non-active students)		
Total staff	Instructional staff SBL	Supervising staff
2	1	1
Up to 12 students – 2 active lines (up to 10 non-active students)		
Total staff	Instructional staff SBL	Supervising staff
3	2 (Lead plus 1)	1

13-24 students – 1 active line (12 non-active students)		
Total staff	Instructional staff SBL	Supervising staff
3	1	2
13-24 students – 2 active lines (10 non-active students)		
Total staff	Instructional staff SBL	Supervising staff
4	2 (Lead plus 1)	2

INFORMED CONSENT

Schools or Groups are responsible for obtaining informed consent from parents/guardians of students / participants prior to the activity. Silverband Lodge does not ask for a waiver from individual parents / guardians. A list of participants and medical forms and parental authority should be available to the group leader supervising activity.

FIRST AID

The abseiling instructor will have a minimum of the following current (within 3 years) first aid qualification or equivalent:

HLTAID011 Provide First Aid

and a current (updated within 12 months) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) qualification or equivalent:

HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

The User Group Leader will be responsible for all student / participant medical forms and for ensuring medical forms and any medications are taken to activity venues.

A first aid kit will be located at the activity site. Additionally, each group is required to supply their own first aid kit. Silverband Lodge and contracted staff with first aid training will administer first aid under the following circumstances:

- In an emergency situation
- If the designated group representative is unable
- If the group's designated first aider cannot be located or in difficulty

All staff / group members with known medical conditions that might compromise the group's risk management plan should make accompanying staff aware of this condition. Be aware that issues of confidentiality will be involved in any such disclosure.

5. RISKS

RISK ASSESSMENT

A detailed risk assessment is conducted of this activity, which is attached to this document and reviewed annually, or as required.

HOW TO

Where applicable, the relevant 'How To' should be read in conjunction with this Activity Plan.

EMERGENCY STRATEGY

Prior to, and on arrival at Silverband Lodge, user groups will be provided with a copy of the Silverband Lodge Emergency Management Plan.

- Mobile phone communication is available at all sites. Emergency vehicle available at all times.
- Participant names, addresses, details, permission forms, medical forms are available to group leader at activity site.
- Any special medical issues are known by user group leader and any students with potential medical conditions are monitored during the activity
- Abseiling is weather dependent and therefore in periods of extreme temperatures or high winds activity will not take place.
- Students not participating in abseiling will be required to stay at camp unless school / group arranges for a staff member / group leader to be at the abseil site with the non-participating student/s / participant/s.
- A school or adult group representative will need to be at the abseil site. In the event that a school / group representative is unavailable to be at the abseil site the activity will be cancelled and schools / groups will be liable for any associated costs.
- A person will be nominated to monitor the behaviour of students at the abseil site, the abseil leader will direct the activities of the abseilers.
- All leaders will be briefed on the emergency strategy and be expected to be able to seek assistance if required.

RISK ASSESSMENT - ROCK CLIMBING & ABSEILING

The list below incorporates some of the risks associated with rock climbing & abseiling.

Please note: the list below is not all encompassing and some associated risks may not have been identified.

Risk Description	Existing Controls	Rating		
		Effectiveness of existing controls	Risk Consequences	Risk Likelihood
Participants fall from height leading to injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-activity safety briefing on belay systems and cliff environment. Adequately qualified staff run all activities with approved instructor ratios. Direct supervision of students at all times by user group staff. All participants must wear correctly fitted helmets and harnesses. Participants will be briefed to remain at least two metres from the cliff edge. Anyone who is operating within two metres of the cliff edge must be on belay or tethered to a secure anchor. No persons will be present on top of the cliff face if they are not directly involved in abseiling. The Abseil Instructor is responsible to ensure participants are aware of the dangers and group leader / assistant will be responsible for ensuring participants remain in "safety zone" 	Satisfactory	Major	Rare
Participant misplaces footing causing the participant to slip or trip leading to injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct footwear is to be worn. Participants are made aware of potential dangers All participants will remain in the designated "safe zone" when not immediately involved in the abseil. The designated "safe zone" chosen will be flat and large enough to accommodate the entire group comfortably. It is the responsibility of the Abseil Instructor to ensure the group understands the "safe zone" and the responsibility of the group leader / assistant instructor to ensure participants remain in the "safe zone" while not directly involved in the abseil. 	Satisfactory	Minor	Likely
Participant becomes entangled in descender caused by loose hair, clothing or jewellery leading to injury and panic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants to remove all jewellery prior to activity. Participants to tie back long hair prior to abseiling. Clothing to be tucked in Ensure belay devices are free of potential entanglements prior to each abseil. Participants made aware of the potential dangers. 	Satisfactory	Minor	Unlikely

RISK ASSESSMENT - ROCK CLIMBING & ABSEILING

Risk Description	Existing Controls	Rating		
		Effectiveness of existing controls	Risk Consequences	Risk Likelihood
Object (including rock) falls from cliff caused by loose rock or unsecure objects leading to injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review site for loosed rock prior to abseiling. Do not drag ropes or other equipment which may dislodge rocks. Teach calls to warn of rock fall and appropriate protective response. Helmets must be worn at all times. Abseil Instructor will set up system before group arrives. 	Satisfactory	Minor	Unlikely
Excessive speed while descending causing rope burn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct and appropriate belay system will be used to ensure slow decent. Briefing will thoroughly explain the descending system to ensure participants understand how to control speed on their descent. Back up belay system will be in place and operated by qualified staff. Leather gloves are offered to participants to avoid rope burn. 	Satisfactory	Insignificant	Rare
Participant misbehaves causing potential danger to themselves and/or the entire group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are briefed and made aware of potential dangers within the rock environment. Behavioural expectations of participants are fully explained. Group leaders/assisting leaders to assist as per camp supervision protocols. In the event of no support, or behaviour that endangers the group, cancellation of the activity In the case that behaviour creates a situation where anyone is put in a potentially dangerous situation, the activity will be cancelled. The Abseil Instructor will be responsible for deciding if circumstances are such that the activity cannot be conducted in a safe manner. If this decision is made the activity will be stopped immediately. 	Satisfactory	Major	Unlikely
Damaged equipment causing failure of system or safety gear, leading to injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All ropes are checked by the Abseil Instructor immediately prior to the activity taking place All equipment is thoroughly checked weekly and as per scheduled maintenance checks. A log of use of equipment is maintained. All equipment meets relevant Australian Standards 	Satisfactory	Major	Rare
Poorly fitting safety equipment leading to injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are briefed on how to correctly fit all safety equipment prior to abseiling. Each participant's gear is individually checked before leaving to go to cliff site to ensure proper fit. A range of sizes are available and in good condition. All equipment meets relevant Australian Standards 	Satisfactory	Moderate	Rare
Strong winds leading to discomfort and potential injury to participant's while abseiling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review weather condition prior to activity. Assess students' ability to cope with increasingly difficult conditions Cancel activity if appropriate. 	Satisfactory	Minor	Unlikely

RISK ASSESSMENT - ROCK CLIMBING & ABSEILING

Risk Description	Existing Controls	Rating		
		Effectiveness of existing controls	Risk Consequences	Risk Likelihood
Exposure to extreme weather conditions including wet, cold and windy or heat and sun causing discomfort and potentially leading to illness such as hyperthermia, extreme sun burn, heat exhaustion or heat stroke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review weather conditions prior to activity Monitor temperature and shorten, relocate or adjust activity as required Ensure adequate fluid intake Ensure appropriate, adequate clothing and protection against elements is worn before and during activity Observe participant's condition during activity. Consideration of wind chill factor if wind is present Cancel activity if conditions are such that activity cannot be conducted safely and participation will place participants in extreme danger. 	Satisfactory	Moderate	Likely
Participant or staff member is stung or bitten by ant, bee, spider etc, leading to swelling or anaphylactic reaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff are aware of any allergies, specifically anaphylactic students. Medications should be carried at all times in close proximity to participant. Evacuation procedure should be well known by staff. Communications will be carried and available at all times. Silverband Emergency Management Plan procedures will be followed. 	Satisfactory	Major	Unlikely

Site Assessments:

Rock Climbing and Abseiling is conducted at several locations close to Halls Gap.

These popular locations are preferred sites recommended by Parks Victoria. Parks Victoria guidance on the safety of these sites will be taken into account prior to use as per the conditions of our Licensed Tour Operators Certificate.

These sites have been selected based on the following:

- The soundness of and safe access to anchor points
- Take-off point is easily accessible and enables comfortable decent
- Belay points are higher than take off point
- Rock faces with easy angled slopes
- Safe, flat area below and on top of the abseil for people not participating and for easy group management.
- Proximity to facilities and road access

The group's prior experience and current abilities will determine the site selection. Sites are chosen to give participants a chance to learn proper technique and gain confidence. Time spent will vary, depending on group size and prior experience.

Location	Distance	Activity	Facilities	Bus Accessible	Distance from parking	Mobile Coverage
Delley's Bridge	1km North Halls Gap	Abseil	No	Yes	500m	Yes
Grand Canyon	5kms from Halls Gap	Rock Climbing & Abseiling	Yes	Yes	500m	Yes
Watchtower Cliff	3kms North Halls Gap	Rock Climbing & Abseiling	No	Yes	300m	Yes
Summer Day Valley	55km North Halls Gap	Rock Climbing & Abseiling	Yes	Yes	700m	Yes
Bundaleer	12 km	Rock Climbing & Abseiling	No	Yes	400m	Yes



RISK ASSESSMENT - ROCK CLIMBING & ABSEILING

Transport:

In the case that Silverband lodge will be transporting participants, transportation will adhere to the VICROADS licensing and registration requirements and DET guidelines and regulations. Supervision of participants while in transit is the responsibility of the visiting groups teachers / leaders.

Silverband lodge will ensure that an appropriate form of communication is available at all activity locations. While in transportation to Bundaleer mobile coverage may drop in and out. Communication with emergency services is ready available.