



Beaude Desert Outdoor Adventures

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) & Risk Assessment: **Abseiling**

Document ID: SOP-BOA-ABSEIL-001

Effective Date: February 2026

Review Date: February 2027

1.0 Purpose

To outline the standardized and safe procedure for conducting Abseiling sessions at Beaude Desert Outdoor Adventures. This document ensures a high-quality instructional experience while maintaining paramount safety standards in the Quarry environment.

2.0 Scope & Instructor Competence

This SOP applies to all staff involved in Abseiling.

- **Technical Advisor (TA):** Joby Davies (Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor).
- **Authorisation (In-House Staff/Volunteers):** Must be trained and assessed in-house by the TA (Joby Davies).
- **Authorisation (Freelance Staff):** Must hold a recognized National Governing Body qualification (e.g., SPA, RCI, or CWI with abseil module) **AND** complete a site-specific induction/assessment by the TA or a designated Senior Instructor.

3.0 Location & Ratios

3.1 Location

- **The Quarry:** The activity takes place at the designated Abseil rock face.
- **Access Control:** The dispatch area at the top of the Quarry is fenced and gated. Participants must remain **outside** the gate until specifically instructed to enter by the instructor.





- **The Steps:** The access steps back to the top of the quarry are steep and can be treacherous; participants must be briefed to take care.

3.2 Ratios

- **Standard Ratio:** 1:12 (One Instructor to twelve participants).
- **Maximum Ratio:** 1:15 (Session duration must be extended to 2 hours).

4.0 Equipment & Rigging

4.1 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- **Helmets:** Mandatory for all participants and the instructor. Must be fitted to protect the forehead.
- **Harnesses:** Sit harnesses must be worn, fitted correctly above the hips, and remain visible at all times (not hidden under coats).
- **Instructor PPE:** Instructor must wear a sit harness, helmet, and use a safety cowstail attached to a designated anchor away from the main lines.

4.2 Rigging the System

- **Anchors:** The primary anchors are wire strops attached to eye bolts on the quarry floor.
- **Protection:** A rubber mat must be placed under the eyelets/connectors to prevent damage from dropping and friction during belaying.
- **The Abseil Rope (Static):**
 - Attached to the lower eyebolt using an Italian Hitch on an HMS carabiner.
 - Locked off with a rolling hitch and one-half hitch to make it releasable.
 - Ensure the rope end is approx. 0.5m off the quarry floor.
 - Coil excess rope neatly next to the anchor for emergency release.
- **The Safety Rope (Dynamic):**
 - Attached to the upper eyebolt using an Italian Hitch on a carabiner.
- **Descender:** A Figure-8 descender is used. Ensure correct orientation to prevent inversion to a Lark's Foot lock. *Note: An extender sling may be used to push the device further away from the participant's body/hair.*



5.0 Safety Briefing & Rules

Mandatory briefing in the seating area away from the quarry edge.

1. **Waiting Area:** Do not approach the gate until called.
2. **Clothing/Hair:** Long hair must be tied back and tucked away. Scarves/neckerchiefs removed. All loose clothing secured (to prevent trapping in the Figure-8).
3. **The Descent:**
 - Feet shoulder-width apart, legs straight, weight back on heels.
 - Controlling hand (brake hand) kept behind the hip, away from the metal descender.
4. **The Bottom:** Once down, unclip all carabiners, attach them to the safety rope, and move clear. (Ideally an adult present at the bottom to aid this)
5. **Return:** Walk slowly and carefully up the steps.

6.0 Session Procedure

6.1 Pre-Session Checks

- **Instructor:** Carry a radio and mobile phone.
- **Environment:** Check the quarry face and bottom for debris, water, mud, or vegetation buildup. (The wall and base must be trimmed/cut back periodically).
- **Rigging:** Complete the rigging as per Section 4.2.

6.2 Activity Management

1. **Adult Assistance:** Position a visiting adult leader at the bottom of the quarry to assist participants with unclipping safely and directing them to the stairs.
2. **Connection:** Call one participant through the gate. Instructor belays the participant from the fence to the abseil point.
3. **Dispatch:**
 - Check all carabiners are locked.
 - Remind participant of stance (weight back, straight legs).
 - Instructor manages the safety (dynamic) rope via the Italian Hitch.
4. **Retrieval:** The Figure-8 should ideally be walked back up the stairs to reduce wear but can be hauled up by the instructor if necessary. *Warn participants below when hauling ropes.*

7.0 Emergency & Incident Procedure

1. **Slipping on Descent:** Hold the safety rope tight, reassure the participant, ask them to replace their feet against the wall, and continue.
2. **Difficulty Leaning Back:** Keep safety rope tight so the participant feels supported by the harness.
3. **Entrapment in Descender (Hair/Clothing):**
 - o **DO NOT** try to pull the trapped item out while under tension.
 - o Tie off the safety (dynamic) rope with two half hitches.
 - o Release the tied-off abseil (static) rope at the anchor to transfer the participant's weight entirely onto the safety rope.
 - o If the participant can now free the jam, relock the abseil rope.
 - o If they cannot free it, or if there is an injury, lower the participant to the ground using the safety rope.

8.0 Risk Assessment

Activity: Abseiling (Quarry)

Review Date: February 2027

Assessment by: Martin Kirby – Operations Manager

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Controls: What are you doing to control hazards?	Risk Rating (with controls)
Falling from top of Quarry	Participants, Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access: Area is fenced with warning signs . • Control: Only one participant allowed in the fenced area at a time per instructor. • Belay: Participant belayed from the fence to the edge. 	Tolerable
Instructor Fall	Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Positioning: Instructor must be clipped into a cowstail (attached to a separate anchor) at all times while near the edge. 	Tolerable

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Controls: What are you doing to control hazards?	Risk Rating (with controls)
Entrapment in Descender (Hair/Clothing)	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing: Loose clothing tucked in, hair tied back. • Rigging: Abseil rope rigged to be releasable. • Equipment: Extender sling used on belay plate if required. 	Tolerable
Head Injury (Contact with Wall)	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE: Helmets mandatory for everyone • Coaching: Briefed on correct stance (legs straight) to keep head away from rock. 	Trivial
Falling Debris / Rockfall	Participants (at base)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE: Helmets worn at all times, especially at the bottom . • Instructor Care: Vigilance to avoid knocking stones/equipment over the edge. • Maintenance: Periodic strimming and clearing of the rock face. 	Tolerable
Slips, Trips and Falls (Steps)	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing: The access steps are treacherous; group briefed to walk slowly. • Footwear: Suitable footwear must be worn. 	Tolerable
Equipment Damage (Anchors)	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection: Rubber mat placed under floor anchors to prevent abrasion from carabiners/ropes during operation. 	Trivial



10.0 Document Control & Review History

Document Creation

Action	Name / Role	Date
Created By	Martin Kirby – Operations Manager	February 2026
Approved By	Martin Kirby, Luke Chance & Oliver Tombs (OM / SI / AOM)	February 2026
Technical Auth.	Joby Davies (Technical Advisor)	February 2026

Review Log

This document is to be reviewed annually or following any significant incident or change to the activity.

Date of Review	Reviewed By	Comments / Changes Made	Next Review Due
February 2026	MKirby / OTombs / LChance	Document Created (V1.0). Updated to include Freelance/In-House qualification tiers, rubber mat anchor protection, and specific Quarry step hazards.	February 2027

