



Aongatete Swimming Hole

Group Information & Safety Guidelines

About the Swimming Hole

The Aongatete Swimming Hole is a popular location for groups staying at Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre (AOEC), as well as members of the public.

The swimming hole is approximately a 30-minute walk from the lodge via the Link Track, which begins on the western side of the lodge. Approximately 15 minutes along the track, a branch to the left leads to the swimming holes.

The branch to the right leads to a flatter section of the Aongatete River. This area can be more suitable for groups wanting to spread out or undertake activities such as:

- River studies
- Building dams
- Craft boat races
- Building river stone sculptures
- Supervised water-based activities with younger children

The final section of the track to the river can become slippery, particularly in damp conditions.

Planning Your Visit

Before taking a group to the swimming hole, the Group Leader should visit and assess the location, where practicable.

The Group Leader is responsible for the health and safety of all participants and supervising adults during the activity.

Before visiting the swimming hole, the Group Leader should:

- Complete a RAMS appropriate to the planned activity and the capabilities of the group.
- Check the weather forecast and current conditions.
- Check river and water conditions.
- Consider recent rainfall and the possibility of rapidly changing river levels.
- Know the swimming ability and water confidence of all participants and supervising adults.
- Ensure appropriate adult supervision is available.
- Ensure all participants understand the Outdoor Safety Code.
- Ensure required emergency equipment is carried.
- Discuss environmental care and Leave No Trace principles with the group.

River levels can change rapidly. If in doubt, stay out.

Water Safety

The swimming hole can be deep, cold and slippery, particularly around entry and exit points.

Before allowing participants to enter the water, the Group Leader and supervising adults should:

- Assess the water conditions.
- Check the swimming area for visible hazards.
- Identify safe entry and exit points.
- Check for submerged rocks, branches or other obstacles where practicable.
- Establish clear boundaries for where participants may swim.
- Ensure participants understand the water safety rules.
- Maintain active supervision throughout the activity.

Participants should never enter water that the supervising adults have assessed as unsafe.

Jumping or diving should only occur where the location has been specifically assessed as safe and the activity is appropriate for the group.

Do not enter the river during thunderstorms or lightning.

Supervision

For water-based activities, a minimum 1 adult to 4 students (1:4) ratio is required.

Each supervising adult should be responsible for no more than four students.

The Group Leader remains responsible for the overall management and safety of the group, including supervising adults.

Additional adults may be required depending on:

- Age of participants
- Swimming ability
- Water confidence
- Behavioural needs
- Medical or physical support requirements
- Weather and river conditions
- The type of activity being undertaken

Supervising adults should remain actively engaged and positioned so they can effectively observe the participants in their care.

Remember: children and young people will model the behaviour of the adults supervising them.

What to Bring

Participants - Everyone should bring:

- Covered footwear for the walk to and from the swimming hole
- Appropriate swimwear
- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Towel
- Water bottle
- Sun protection
- Personal medication, where required
- Emergency Equipment
- The Group Leader should carry an emergency pack containing:
 - First aid kit
 - Emergency blanket
 - Waterproof/rainproof layer
 - Warm clothing, including a beanie
 - Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), where appropriate
 - Mobile phone
 - Torch
 - Emergency water
 - Emergency food

Check all emergency equipment before leaving the lodge.

Weather & River Conditions

Weather and river conditions must be considered before and during every visit. The activity must not proceed if:

- Severe weather presents an unacceptable risk.
- High winds create hazards from falling branches.
- Flooding or storm damage affects the track or rivers.

River levels can rise quickly following rainfall, and conditions can change while a group is at the swimming hole.

The activity should be postponed, changed or cancelled if conditions are considered unsafe.

If in doubt, stay out.

Do not take unnecessary risks to access or remain at the swimming hole.

Outdoor Safety

All participants and supervising adults should understand and follow the Outdoor Safety Code.

Before leaving the lodge, the Group Leader should discuss:

- Staying together
- Water safety
- What to do if someone gets into difficulty
- Weather changes
- River hazards
- Appropriate behaviour
- Emergency procedures
- Environmental care

Every participant should know what is expected of them before entering the water.

Environmental Care

The swimming hole and surrounding forest are shared natural environments. Please help us protect them.

Participants should:

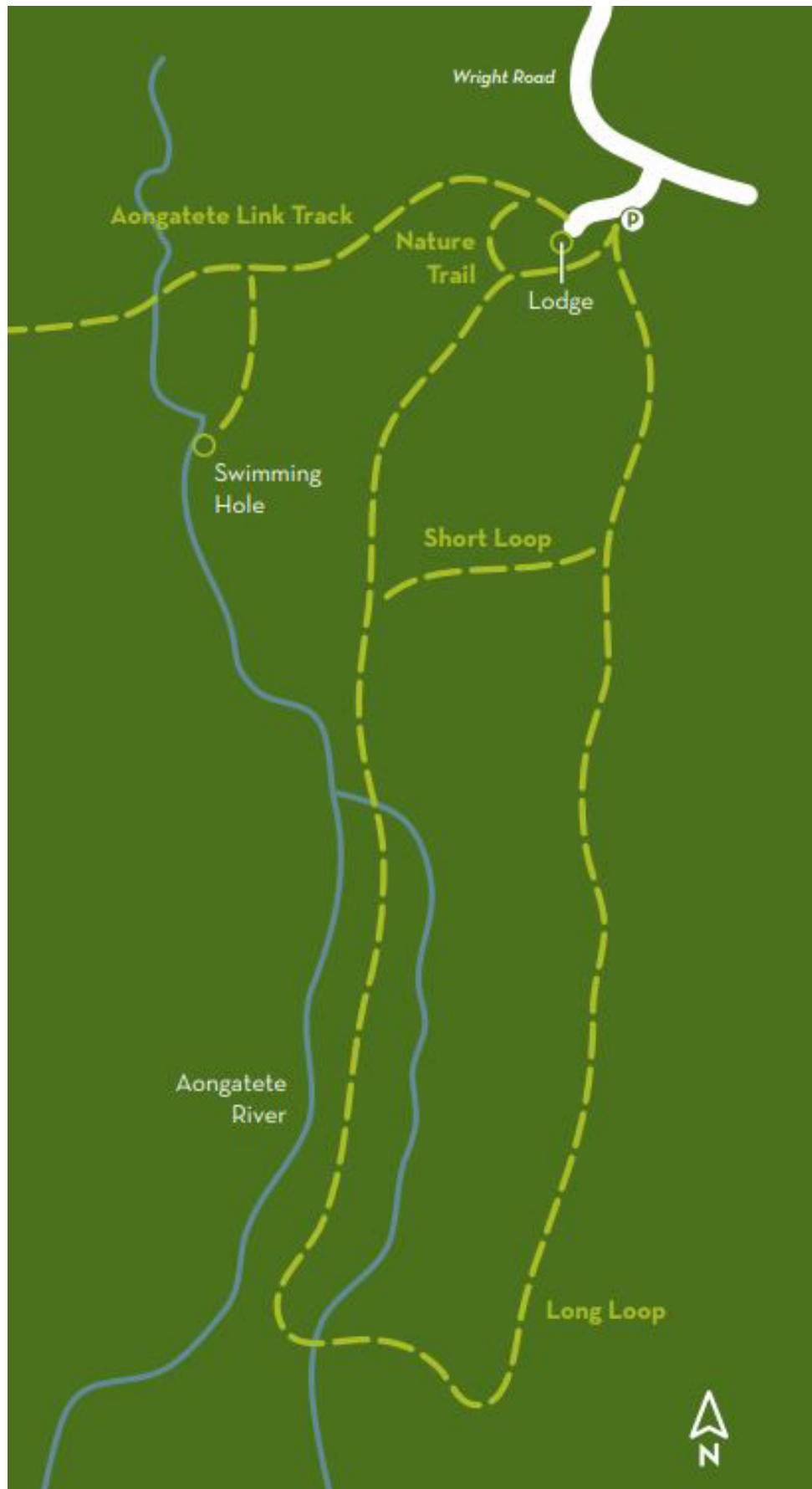
- Stay on the designated tracks.
- Take all rubbish back with them.
- Avoid damaging plants and vegetation.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural features where they are.
- Do not disturb wildlife.
- Respect other groups and members of the public using the area.
- Leave the swimming hole and surrounding area as you found it.

Leave No Trace — take everything you bring with you back out

Incident Reporting

Any accident, injury, incident or near miss should be reported to the Group Leader and recorded on the group's Safety Log at the Kitchen Safety Station, regardless of how minor it may initially appear.

Early reporting helps ensure hazards are identified and managed and provides important information should a more serious incident occur.



River Fun - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan	Date: 15/04/2026	Next Review Date: 15/12/2026		
	Risk Rating System: Likelihood (1–5) x Consequence (1–5): 1–5 Low - 6–10 Moderate - 11–15 High				
	What would cause someone to get hurt?	What could happen?	Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
People	• Group Leaders/Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/ hyperthermia) • Damage to the environment	10	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with area, Outdoor safety code, environment code, responsibility & RAMS prior to camp/activity commencement.	3
	• Bad Planning • Outdoor Safety Code not practiced • Environment Care Code not practiced	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/ hyperthermia) • Damage to the environment	10	• Prepare and follow the outdoor safety code and river safety code.	3
	• Not Sufficient Supervision	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical Well-being (hypothermia/ hyperthermia)	10	• Allow for a 4:1 Ratio • Identify any non confident swimmers and assign adults to carefully watch/help those individuals • Know the groups numbers and head count before/during/after	3
	• Poor Briefing/instruction	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/ hyperthermia) • Damage to the environment	10	• Go with group through instructions, environment care/safety guidelines & hazards • Firmly enforce water safety rules and environment care	3
	• Jumping rock - poor form • Jumping on to a swimmer	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury	9	• Brief the group on where to jump from and when • Have an adult checking and allowing the next jumper	3
	• Participants/Supervisors not confident around water or swimming	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury	9	• Identify non swimmers/not confident swimmers	4
	• Special Needs not identified	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Not enough support	6	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Who is the nominated knowledgeable person to deal with known medical/behavioural issues. • Adjust activity to fit everyones ability	4
	• Student/Group Leader/Supervising Adult becomes incapacitated (Injury, heart attack, asthma, etc)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Who is the nominated knowledgeable person to deal with known medical/behavioural issues • Other Adults in Group must know what to do in an emergency • Bring any medication that may be needed. • Pack PLB • Be sure to have a qualified first aider who can preform CPR	8
Equipment	• Poor Clothing & Footwear	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia/hyperthermia	9	• Before leaving, check that everyone in group (students and adults) are wearing appropriate clothing and foot ware. Must wear covered shoes, dress for the conditions. • Take extra layers	4
	• No or Insufficient Equipment (emergency food & drink, first aid, extra warm layers, communication device)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia/hyperthermia	9	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Area, Outdoor Safety Code, Environment Care Code, responsibilities & RAMS prior to camp/activity commencement. Prepare and pack accordingly. • Carry additional warm clothing for emergencies • Carry First Aid Kit • Carry PLB • PLB	3
	• Weather unsuitable for session	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia)	15	• Check weather forecast • Evaluate weather conditions and changes • Be aware of changing river levels/conditions • If in doubt stay out and/or cancel/halt the activity	5

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	What would cause someone to get hurt?	What could happen?	Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
Environment	• Slippery rocks	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia)	6	• Take care • Wear shoes/rock shoes. • Assist each other	4
	• Shallow/deep water	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Warn groups of the dangers of water, drownings can happen in shallow and deep water. • Non confident swimmers to be identified and assisted • Supervisors to watch a selected group of 4	3
	• River to swift, high or cold	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia/hyperthermia	15	• Stay out of river, do not attempt to cross if its too high or swift, return the way you came or wait until river is safe to cross.	5
	• Strainer or hidden hazards in the water	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	15	• Group Leader/Instructor to check area for hazards before students	3
	• Damage to environment or harm to living creatures	• Damage to environment • Harm to living creatures	4	• Stay on track, follow only orange markers, do not step or pull on plants • Do not harm or touch any living creatures on land or in water	2

Emergency Plan	First Aid	Medical Treatment	Serious Injury
	• Who is the trained and nominated First Aider	• Follow Emergency Action Plan Discussed at Pre Activity Safety Talk and at Safety Stations	• See Emergency Action Plan discussed at Safety Talks and at Safety Stations
	• First Aid Kit - Instructors have this	• Katikati Medical Centre 07 549 0411 4 • Clive Road, Katikati	• Call 111 or activate PLB
	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults and knowledgeable person to deal with it	• Tauranga Hospital, Cameron Road, Tauranga • 07 579 8000	• Nominate someone to meet Emergency Services at Gate
	• Incident & Accident Reporting	• Report to AOEC Management • Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	• Report to AOEC Management • Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station