

Company: Thistle Trekking LTD	<b>River Crossing Policy</b>	Compiled by: Scarlet Trevett
Date completed: November 2011	All procedures should be reviewed if changes are made to the trip, e.g. the group, transport, ratios etc.	Updated/Reviews: 24.1.2019

When possible, all rivers crossings should be avoided however on some guided walks in may be necessary to cross a river with a group.

If a river crossing become vital the following should be taken into consideration by the guide:

Before crossing study the river carefully. Some of the dangers to look out for include:

- deep or fast-flowing water
- 'strainers', dead trees in the river which can catch people underwater
- submerged, sharp, or slippery rocks, and
- an uneven or unstable bottom

Not all of these dangers will be visible upon a casual inspection.

**If the river is too dangerous to cross at this point, look for a safer crossing point. Alternatively, be prepared to wait for the water level to drop or go back.**

Every river is different however the leader must adhere to the following:

- very fast flowing, white water: unsafe - DO NOT CROSS
- fast flowing: greater than ankle-deep - DO NOT CROSS
- fast flowing: cannot see the bottom - DO NOT CROSS
- fast flowing: if less than ankle-deep and can see the bottom, cross only if you feel the group is safe to do so.
- moderate flow or slower: greater than knee-deep - DO NOT CROSS
- moderate flow or slower: if less than knee-deep and can see the bottom, cross only if you feel the group is safe to do so.

There are several things you must do before you start to cross the river:

- All group members and guide must have footwear on, DO NOT CROSS BAREFOOT.
- If you can see obstructions in the river, plan a route through them before entering the water, but be prepared to change if things are not what you expected. Select a point on the opposite bank where you will exit the water.

- Consider whether the use of poles will help or hinder the customers and advise them as appropriate.
- Brief groups that the guide will help them cross, and that they should not help each other. Most of our customers have fallen in river crossings when being “helped” by another member of the group.
- Brief group of what to do if carried away (see below)

If you are carried away:

If you are carried away with the flow of the water attempt to manoeuvre yourself so that your feet point downstream and you are facing up (on your back). Remove your rucksack. Try to swim to the nearest bank as quickly as possible.

Out of the water:

Make sure that all group members are warm and continue to monitor their temperature levels for the rest of the day as shoes and feet may be wet. Be aware of hypothermia symptoms for the rest of the walk.