International Canyoning
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Introductions

I discovered canyoneering in Utah in 2014 as many do, on a family trip to Zion. After a few years of weekend trips in the Western United States, I began to plan and travel out of the country to different regions for more aquatic adventures.

Along with my husband Brian, in the past 3 years we have taken multiple trips to Europe and to Canada and Central America. This past year we were able to visit and canyoneer in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, Costa Rica, and 6 Western States. We are currently planning our next trips, which will include 3 new countries and regions. As much as I enjoy traveling for the canyons, I also enjoy the preparation.

Deciding where to go can be made easier if you pay attention to the peak season of different regions. There is a feature on ropewiki that can help you do this. Getting advice from locals is also a good idea in trip planning, and made easier by using the resource list of guides on the Coalition of American Canyoneers (CAC) website, or one of the International Facebook groups, such as Canyoneers of Facebook.
Logistic of Oversea Traveling

Cash
Watch the currency exchange rate and order it ahead of your trip, usually your own bank will give you a good rate. One of the biggest time wasters on a trip is when you don't have enough cash and now you are running around looking for an ATM. In many countries, they won't take AMEX, and smaller merchants won't take credit cards at all. Make an agreement with your group of what each person will have with them in cash. Otherwise, inevitably someone in your group won't have enough and you'll end up paying for them.

Lodging
Lodging is my favorite part of trip planning when it comes together nice. I use Airbnb, Flipkey, and VBRO. Usually the guidebooks for the country you are visiting will give you additional local websites where lodging can be searched. Ideally you are traveling in a group, and so you will be able to get a full house. Those are best because you will need space to hang up all your wet gear to dry. A condo or apartment won't have any space for that. A good kitchen will help save a ton of money and I recommend you limit meals out, and do your own cooking. If you are traveling in a small group, I recommend you look into hostels. Many are really great, have private rooms, and access to kitchens. You may also find a hostel completely filled with other canyoneers!

Packing for a Trip
What to carry (or not)
One of the most important things is to make sure of your flight/baggage restrictions. International airline companies can have weight restrictions on your carry on, so look them up. I strongly advise you take everything you MUST have for your trip with you on carry on, except your climbing knife (which must be checked). I always wear my pack onto the plane, and remove the helmet before I stuff it into the overhead so it doesn't get cracked. I keep it with my purse under my seat. My harness, wetsuit, shoes, and sometimes rope are in my carry on! If it was in checked bags and they lose it, my trip is over!
Meals
Meal times in Europe and elsewhere differ widely from in the USA, and often NOT early in the morning or evening. Outside of lunch midday, dinner is usually after 7 or 8 pm, and can be as late at 11pm. In northern Spain, for example, expect to find lunch only till 3pm, and then nothing till after 7. In the summer it is light until 10pm, so many people don't eat dinner till very late. You should plan your meals with this in mind. Also, you will not find “fast food” abroad, and in Italy or Switzerland the gas stations are a very good place to grab your breakfast or coffee. They are nice (not like in the USA!). One thing to note: Trail mix and energy bars you should bring with you in your luggage. You won’t find American “canyon snacks” in Europe.

Driving
Another reason you need cash? Most of the roads in Europe will have tolls! Have a little pot of coins for the toll roads, up to 25 Euros. Be aware that for driving directions google is ineffective in Europe. You will waste a lot of time missing turns and exits. Find out what the best system is for the country you are visiting and download it. You can also find a list of common European road signs (such as a red circle with a horizontal white bar through it means no entry). Make sure you learn a little about road rules if you will be driving! AND get an international drivers license. Many countries are requiring them from Americans now.

And your car rental? Make sure you have unlimited miles, and video tape the condition of the car before and after. (My Go-to car rental company is SIXT).
**What not to do**

Well, of course this depends on the country you are visiting. Be careful and do your research before you go. Respect their customs. Tipping is not always expected outside of the USA. Don’t expect your meals on American timetables.

Don’t have fixed plans. Be flexible. Be ready to reset plans based on weather, conditions of canyons or group dynamics (tired, injured, cold, unprepared or wanting more or less challenge). When picking out canyons have a plan A, B and maybe even a plan C!

**Medical and the other Insurance**

Make sure you have the correct travel insurance for your trip. If you end up needing medical attention, do you have resources to cover it? In a foreign country if you do not have insurance they accept you may have to provide cash. Fortunately, most medical care abroad is relatively cheap. Pharmacies carry most medications and many without a prescription. You should however, get NOMAD travel insurance. If you are in Switzerland, join Rega for Swiss helicopter ambulance services. $45 francs a year subscription and if you need a rescue it will be free!
Technical Canyoning Outside USA

Beta: Ropewiki is not always the best place to get all beta from outside the USA. Check around for local beta sites. Google translate can help you translate beta when you find it.

Americans rely heavily on GPS data and detailed route descriptions in their beta. Do not expect to find that in Europe, where trails are well established and often marked, and beta will consist only of a few highlights you don’t want to miss, such as a special toboggan, and the longest drop (rope required). It is common to find a drawing of the canyon, and a topo or trail map, but never GPS tracks.

Remember: nowhere outside of the US will you be using feet, yards, and miles. Get used to kilometers and meters.

In many areas the group size is limited, and it varies depending on the canyon. There are also rules about spacing of groups in the can-
yons. In Sierra de Guara, for example, you need to wait your turn at the start with 15 minutes spacing between groups. Once in the canyon if you are a small fast group you can ask a larger group if you can pass... but be aware, there is always another big group ahead of them! So relax. Take you time, enjoy the canyon.

**Canyoneering gear to take:** Travel light! Most common European or Canadian canyon trips will be in established and maintained canyons. And many C-class canyons have lots of jumps and toboggans, and unlike USA canyons they are usually bolted. So consider the type of gear for the style of canyon: you won’t want a bunch of ascenders and hardware hanging off your hips down a steep fluted slide (unless you like a lot of bruises). Do research your potential canyon beta to decide about ropes. Consider extra rope in case you damage yours. In most of the rest of the world, “Canyoning” means descending very aquatic canyons. We call these C-class, but the style and characteristics in the European Alps aren’t anything like the C-class canyons in the Sierras, PNW, or Ouray where the canyons are more open and natural anchors can be found. In most of the rest of the world slot canyons that are filled with water are bolted and no webbing is used. Please
WARNING
CANYONING CAN BE VERY DANGEROUS

European canyons are often long and aquatic in nature (C-class). Some are sparsely rigged and almost all are flood prone. Canyoneering is a dangerous sport with real risks and hazards, most of which relate specifically to the sport. Even those with extensive training should hesitate before attempting certain canyons until they are sure of their canyoneering ability in specific regional conditions.

This guide is meant as a reference to loosely suggest some tips for those wishing to experience international canyoneering.

While I have tried to be as accurate and thorough as possible, the tips contained relate to my own experience and knowledge (mainly northern Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Canada, etc.) and is thus mildly limited.

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respect the locals and do not add webbing to their anchors. Learn how to rig straight off the bolts. You will need to be able to build a retrievable handline as some anchor stations may be hard to reach safely. Bring extra rapides to add to the hangars if necessary. You most likely will need to navigate large jumps, slides, swim over and through current and manage to rappel in heavier flow than you are used to. If you do not feel confident in heavy flowing water, look for canyons with lighter flow or less vertical drops. Plan your trips to match your strengths in the sport.

Dam releases and water flow conditions
Be aware that many canyon have dams which control water flow in the canyon you want to descend. You will need to call and find out if a release is scheduled before you descend. You may need a local person who speaks the native language to make the call for you. Be aware also that if the locals say the water is normal flow, that it may be too much for your group. One of the most important things in a successful trip is making sure that every canyon descent is a good match for your group, and that everyone feels safe and able to have a good time. You are only as strong as your weakest link.