



# Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River Canoeing

後志利別川 River Touring Map 1:25000



0 250 500 750 1000m

1cm on the map equals approx. 250m on the ground  
Magnetic declination: 9° 38' W

Map by [hokkadowilds.org](http://hokkadowilds.org)/Rob Thomson CC BY-SA 2019/09/02

## Symbol Key (some may not be present)

	Route (distance   gradient)		Contour lines (100m, 10m)
	National Highway		Power transmission lines
	Prefectural Road		Trees/shrubs
	Municipal Road		Rocks/cliff
	Minor Municipal Road		Onsen (hot spring)
	Walkway		Fumerole
	Bus route (bus stop)		Highway number
	Put in/out location		Designated campsite
	Waterfall		Hut
	Rapids		Portage required

この地図の作成に当たっては、国土地理院長の承認を得て、同院発行の基礎地図情報及び電子地形図（タイル）を使用した。（承認番号 平 30 情使、第 867 号）また、1/25,000 縮尺の GIS データ（環境省生物多様性センター）も使用し、[hokkadowilds.org](http://hokkadowilds.org) が作成・加工したものである。  
This map uses the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan digital basemap (tiles) and basemap data, with the permission of the Authority's director (permission no. 平 30 情使、第 867 号). It also uses modified 1:25,000 scale vegetation map GIS data created by the Biodiversity Center of Japan, Ministry of the Environment (<http://gis.biodic.go.jp>).

## Japanese Map Glossary

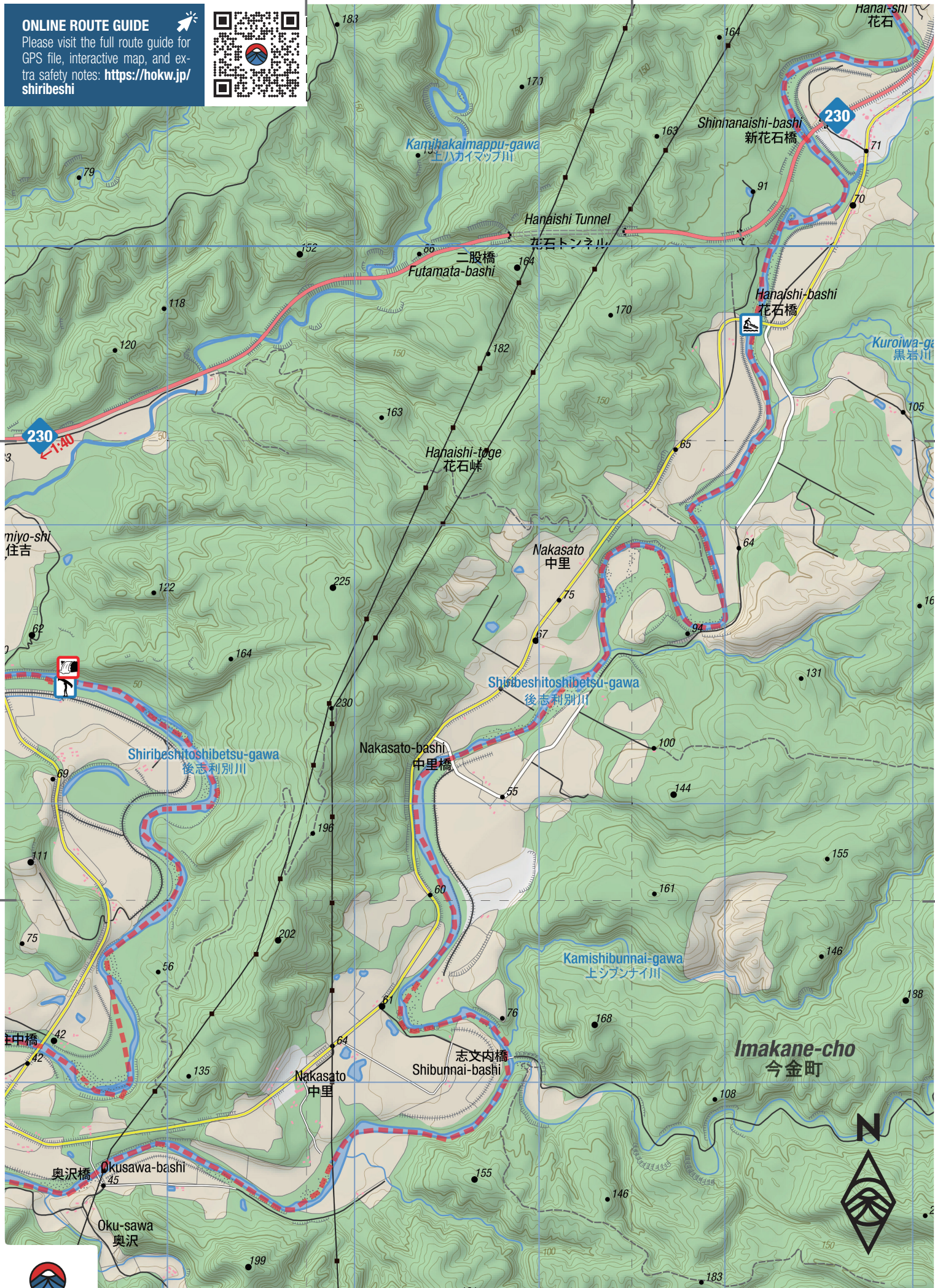
Romaji	Kanji	English
<i>bashi/hashi</i>	橋	bridge
<i>bunki</i>	分岐	junction
<i>cho</i>	町	town
<i>dake/mine</i>	岳/峯	peak
<i>eki</i>	駅	station
<i>goya/koya</i>	小屋	hut
<i>hinangoya</i>	避難小屋	shelter
<i>ike</i>	池	pond
<i>kawa/gawa</i>	川	river
<i>kako</i>	火口	crater
<i>ko/mizumi</i>	湖	lake
<i>kyo</i>	峡	gorge
<i>numa</i>	沼	pond
<i>onsen</i>	温泉	hot spring
<i>sawa</i>	沢	stream
<i>taira/daira</i>	平	plateau
<i>tani/dani</i>	谷	valley
<i>taki</i>	滝	waterfall
<i>toge</i>	峠	pass
<i>yama/san/zan</i>	山	mountain





# ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

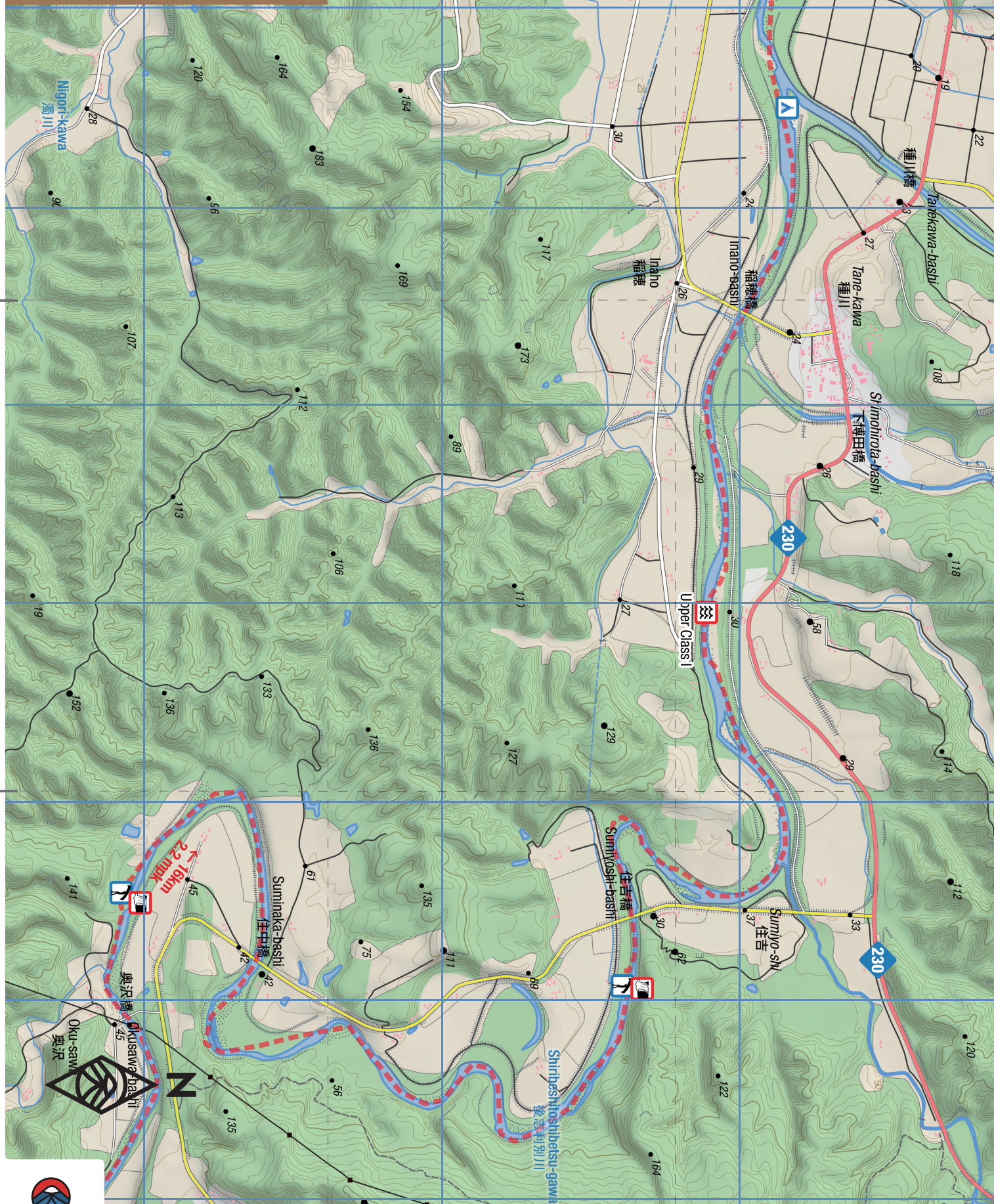
Please visit the full route guide for  
GPS file, interactive map, and ex-  
tra safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/shiribeshi>







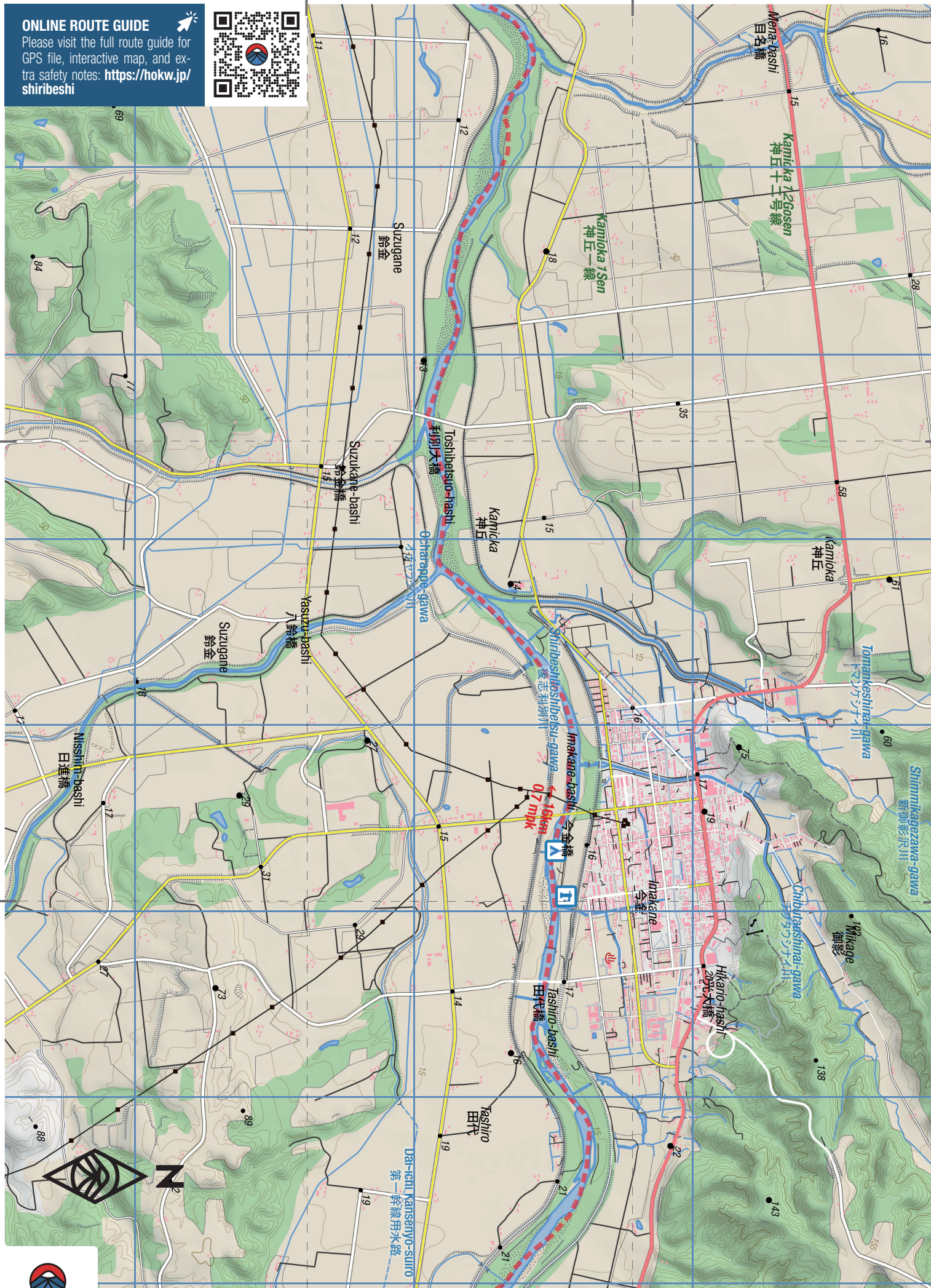
Magnetic declination: 9° 38' W  
Map by [hokkadowilds.org](http://hokkadowilds.org) CC BY-SA 4.0 2019/09/02



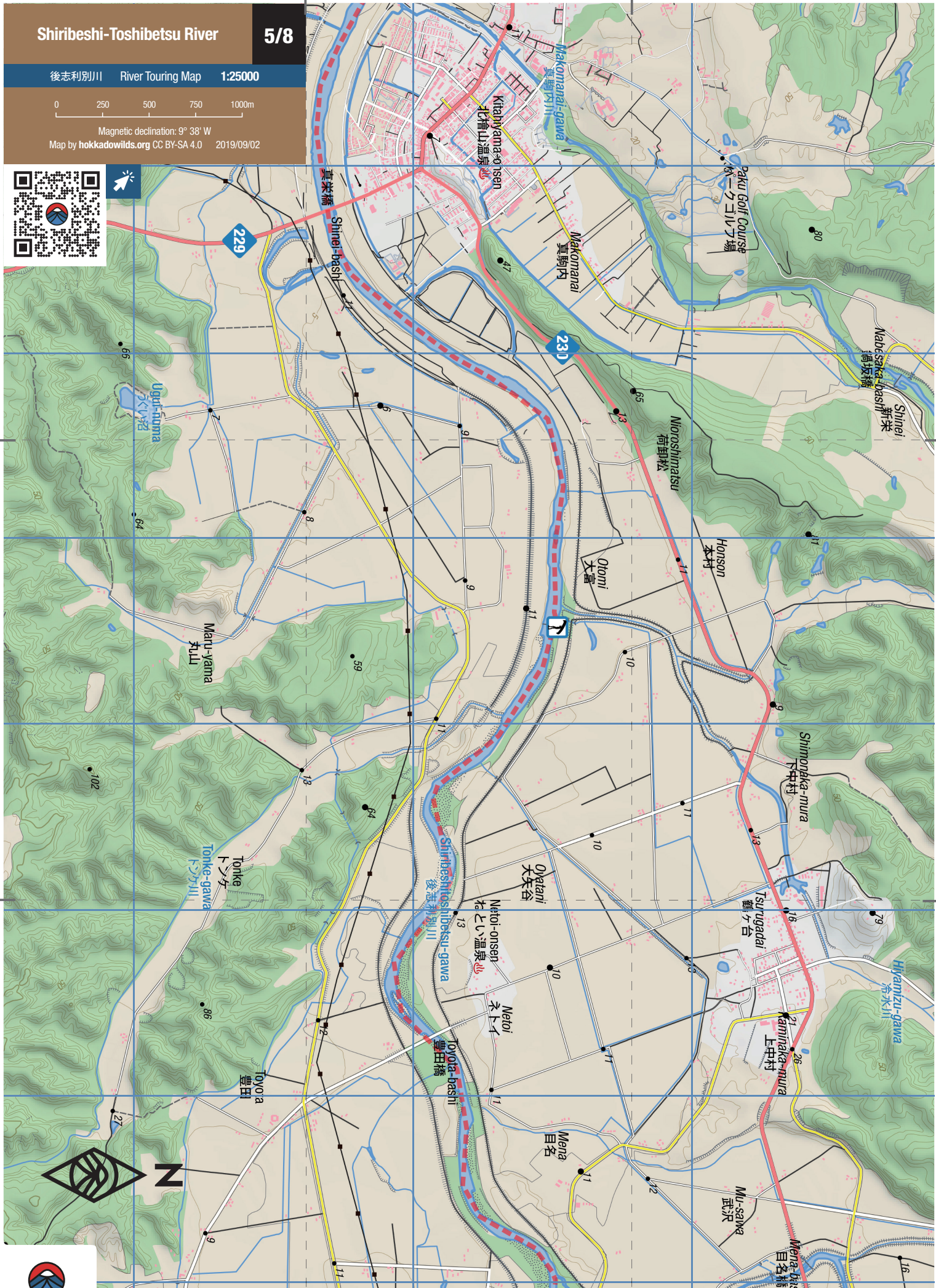


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# Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River



3 days  
Time



2590m  
Total Climb



2141m  
Highest point



36km  
Distance



9/10  
Difficulty



Jul-Sep  
Best season

The pristine Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River (後志利別川) flows east to west across the Oshima Peninsula, about 50km north of Hakodate in southern Hokkaido. It's been judged the cleanest river in Japan dozens of years in the past. With only one Class 1+ rapid to speak of, it is well-known as a family- and beginner-friendly river for canoeing and kayaking. This overnight route starts just below the Pirika Dam, and follows the river 50km to the sea.

## LOCATION AND ACCESS

This 51km downriver trip is on the Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River in southern Hokkaido, about 50km north of Hakodate. There are a couple of options for put-in location. If the Pirika Dam is letting out at least 20m<sup>3</sup>/s (see online route post for live water levels) then putting in right below the dam is feasible. The 5km from the dam to the hydro outlet is a classic pool-and-drop section of river. When we did the trip in July 2019, the dam was letting out 6.29m<sup>3</sup>/s, and we spent five hours lugging boats and gear down each drop. There just wasn't enough water to paddle down, or even line the canoes down. It is likely that under most normal conditions, the Hanai-

shi Bridge (花石橋) just upstream from the hydro outlet is going to be the most feasible put in location.

For taking out at the end of the trip, there is a convenient sandy parking area atop the stop-banks at the river mouth. Canoes and gear will need to be portaged for about 50m from the sandy river mouth beach.

## GENERAL NOTES

The Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River's claim to fame is it has been selected as Japan's cleanest river more times than any other Class A river in Japan. We can see why – the river is extraordinarily clean for the first 15km or so from the dam, and beyond this, the river stays quite clear for a good decent 20km or so. The bird-life is amazing on the river, with more *kawazemi* and *yamazemi* kingfishers we've ever seen in Hokkaido, as well as more *tsuru* cranes we've ever seen anywhere. The upper 5km section just below the dam is teeming with fish too.

That said, the river has seen it's fair share of human intervention, with plenty of straightening work. While this may discourage paddlers from paddling the full length to the river mouth, we heartily recommend going the full distance. The lower 10km or so to the river mouth is teeming

with bird life, and despite being very close to farmland, you'd not know it – the banks are shrouded in thick trees. The river mouth itself is a gorgeous freshwater lagoon.

This route is billed as suitable for families and beginners in many guidebooks we have on hand, but this probably assumes some level of ability and confidence in keeping a canoe or kayak in a straight line – those with very little moving water experience may be surprised at the upper Class I rapids along the route, as well as a couple of nasty strainer-corners that might be best lined down. On our trip, one of our canoes didn't quite clear one particular low-lying branch, and capsized. Luckily everyone got out mostly unscathed, but for some bumps and bruises, and some wet clothes.

As mentioned above, the most fool-proof option for putting in on this route is just upstream from the dam outflow at the Hanaishi Bridge, about 5km downstream from the dam itself.

## ROUTE NOTES

Broadly speaking, the Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River can be split into three sections

### SECTION 1 - Pirika Dam to the hydro outlet | 5km, 4.3mpk

This is an absolutely gorgeous, pristine section of river. Amazing fish life. At anything less than 10m<sup>3</sup>/s outflow from the dam, however, this section would best be river-walked without a canoe, just to enjoy the scenery. At below 10m<sup>3</sup>/s from the dam, you'll be lining and dragging your boat most of the way anyway.

**SECTION 2 - Hydro outlet to Imakane Town | 30km, 2.2mpk** | Beyond the hydro outlet just downstream from the Hanaishi Bridge (花石橋), there's more water in the river, so it's much more fun in a canoe. There are easy swifts, one Class 1+ rapid, and gorgeous high cliffs. The most kingfishers we've





ever seen in Hokkaido. Of course, keep vigilant of classic Hokkaido river hazards – namely weirs and downed-tree strainers. Ideally you'd want to run this section in water levels of 25m or more, as measured at the Sumiyoshi Bridge (see online guide for live levels). We ran it in 24.85m in July 2019, and were wishing for at least another 20cm or so. Our canoe bottoms got a beating – gelcoat repairs required. There are two portages required on this section, both with steep take-outs and put-ins.

**Nakasato Weir (中里頭首工):** This weir is not always raised – it may be possible to paddle straight through. If it is raised, then a portage is needed, with less-than-ideal access to the river banks. It's a steep haul of the canoes up to a grassy access area on the left side, about 75m from the weir itself. This area is fenced off with a 1m-high fence, but the fence sections seem to be moveable – we were able to drop one to the ground. We camped in this area. To put the canoes back into the river on the other side of the weir, carry them 200m to the end of the fencing. From there it's again a bush-bashing steep slope down to the river.

**Sumiyoshi Weir (住吉頭首工):** This weir is also open sometimes. It wasn't when we were there, requiring a steep scramble portage around the left side. The take out is about 20m from the weir itself – just keep edging along the left side till you get to the concrete, and you'll see a steep concrete 'ramp'. Put back in just past the weir, after clambering down the bank. This is about 100m of portage.

**SECTION 3 - Imakane Town to river mouth at Setana** | 16km, 0.7mpk  
With a stiff headwind at times, we managed to knock this mostly flat section out in about 3.5 hours. This section has the most

birdlife, and the river mouth lagoon is stunning. Most of the river banks are man-made, but they're enveloped in bushy trees. There's one river-wide weir-like man-made drop that could be run if water levels were high enough – this is used as a river-wide salmon fishing installment later in the year. When the salmon nets are up, you'll need to portage around the right-hand side.

#### TRANSPORT

**By car** | The put in (Pirika Dam 美利河ダム or Hanaishi Bridge 花石橋) and take-out location are accessible by car, with plenty of parking. See online guide for location links.

**Public transport** | Pirika Onsen (ピリカ温泉), just up from the Pirika Dam (美利河ダム), is accessible by public bus from the Setana-kawajiri bus stop (瀬棚川尻バス停) from near the takeout location at the coast. The bus runs 4-5 times per day, and will take about 1.5hrs, costing 970yen one-way (Suica and other e-money cards can be used). Hanaishi Bridge (花石橋) – the preferred put-in location under most water level conditions – is also accessible by bus from the coast; get off at the Hanaishi Bus stop (花石バス停). See the online guide for links to routes and timetables.

#### SAFETY NOTES

This route is not particularly remote, in the sense that a main road is not far away at any point. However, apart from the odd gold panner, you'll be the only ones on the river. Paddlers need to be self-sufficient. As always, be vigilant of classic Hokkaido river hazards including downed tree strainers on the outside of river bends.

#### CAMPING

There are a few spots along the way suitable for camping – both official and wild campspots. See online guide for facilities and location links.

#### Pirika Campground (ピリカキャンプ場)

The Pirika Campground near the Pirika Dam had a make-over in 2017, so it is one of Hokkaido's more well-kept campgrounds. Just next door is the Pirika Onsen, which has a shop and restaurant. For 2,500yen, you can rent a BBQ with premium wagyu beef included. They offer a full camping set rental for 8,000yen to 10,000yen per night, to accommodate four people (onsen fee included). Location: 42.46956 N /



140.20314 E | 1000 yen per person | Open: Apr-Oct | Staff hours: 7:00am till 10:00pm | Closest Onsen: Pirika Onsen (ピリカ温泉), 500yen, 0.1km from campground

#### Nakasato Weir (中里頭首工)

This wild camp spot on the Shiribeshi-Toshibetsu River is suitable in a pinch, if absolutely required. Depending on the season, you'll need to haul your canoes up and around the weir anyway. Consists of a hard-packed gravel parking area and a raised platform. Location: 42.38642 N / 140.10387 E | Free | Closest Onsen: None

#### Meppu River Confluence (メップ川合流点)

This wild camp spot is on a 2m raised gravel bar at the confluence of the Meppu River into the Shiribeshi-toshibetsu River. If you really want to get away from it all, it would be a nice secluded spot to have a quiet camp on your way down the Shiribeshi-toshibetsu River. One guidebook mentions an abundance of dry driftwood. Location: 42.41765 N / 140.05259 E | Free | Closest Onsen: Tanekawa Onsen (種川温泉), 440yen, 1.3km from campground.

#### Imakane Riverside (今金河川敷)

This riverside wild campspot is within easy reach of the Imakane village, where you'll find a Lawson convenience store and the Imakane Onsen hotspots. The campsite itself doesn't have water or toilets, but there's a public fountain about 250m away, and clean public toilets 200m away. When we were there in August 2019 there was also a nice shady spot under a couple of small trees. Location: 42.42142 N / 140.01158 E | Free | Closest Onsen: Imakane Onsen (今金温泉), 450yen, 0.75km from campground.

#### ONSEN NEARBY

There are three onsen along the way. Tanekawa Onsen (種川温泉, 440yen), Imakane Onsen (あったかランド今金, 450yen), and Kitahiyama Onsen (北檜山温泉, 400yen). The latter two have restaurants attached. ■



#### ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guide for GPS file, interactive map, and extra safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/shiribeshi>



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#### MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson

[hokkaidowilds.org](http://hokkaidowilds.org) 2019/09/02

MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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## PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Load your printer with A4 printer paper (210mm x 297mm). If you've only got Letter size (215.9mm x 279.4 mm), just follow the instructions below. You'll achieve an accurate scale, but the map will be clipped a little at the top and bottom.

### STEP 2

Open the print window by clicking on File > Print (or hitting Ctrl + P on your keyboard).

### STEP 3

Make sure "Actual Size" is selected.

### STEP 4

For double-sided printing, select "Print on both sides of paper".

### STEP 5

For best results, select the highest quality print option available on your printer (settings will vary).

### STEP 6

You won't need this instructions page, so just select the pages that don't include this instruction sheet.

### STEP 7

Click "Print".

## PLEASE PRINT AT 'ACTUAL SIZE' (NO SCALING)

The 1:25,000 scale used in the map is accurate if the PDF is printed without scaling (i.e., ACTUAL SIZE). Follow the instructions on this page to ensure an accurate rendering of the scale.

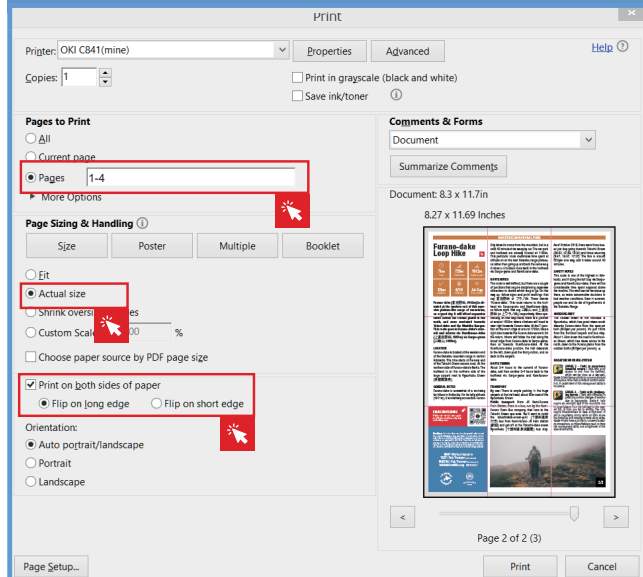


Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size", and Pages 1-4 are selected (Windows).

## ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

