



Lower Mukawa River Overnighter

鵜川（下流）Canoeing Map 1:25000





2 days

Time



31km

Distance




Class II

Difficulty




1/5

Remoteness



3/5

Water clarity



May-Oct

Best season

This is a leisurely beginner-friendly overnight canoe route on the Mukawa River 鵜川, only two hours drive east from Sapporo City. The route starts from Tomiuchi, where the river transforms to a gentle meander - a far cry from the steep whitewater further upstream. Paddlers will enjoy deep forested river banks, teeming with wildlife. Keep an eye out for native ezo deer wading across the river, as well as storks and other wild birds. There are a number of convenient gravel banks to camp on along the way. In this route, we recommend taking out before the first major weir on the river.

LOCATION
The Mukawa River is a major waterway flowing from deep in the northern Hidaka Range out to the Pacific Ocean east of Tomakomai, at the small town of Mukawa.

Put-in location: The put in location for this section of the Mukawa River is about 300m down a gravel road on the right-hand bank downstream from Tomiuchi-bashi Bridge (富内橋), near the small settlement of Tomiuchi (富内), about 20 minutes by car north along the river from Hobetsu Town.
Take-out location: It's possible to paddle all the way to the sea on the Mukawa, but there are two large weirs along the way. Therefore, we opted to take out just before the first of the two weirs. Note, however, that the weir was raised when

we did this route, making the aforementioned location the most convenient spot. That said, it did require about 100m of wading through waist high grass to where we parked our car. If the weir is not raised, it may be more practical to take out on the river right side of the weir. We recommend allowing plenty of time to scout take-out options before getting on the water.

GENERAL NOTES
The Mukawa is well known in the Hokkaido

paddling community. It's a true has-everything river, with steep Grade 3-4 bouldery rapids upstream, and a true beginner-friendly lower section perfect for a leisurely overnight trip. We've also paddled part of this lower section in near-flood conditions. It can get pretty hairy in high water, but on the whole, it's a relatively well behaved river. There's a plethora of wild river camping options along the way with plenty of driftwood available for a relaxing summer campfire.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
The Mukawa is perfect for a very leisurely overnight trip, so we recommend taking it easy on both days. Expect about 2-3 hours paddling each day.

If water levels are low, put in just below the rapids just downstream of the Tomiuchi Bridge. If the river has a good flow to it, these Grade 2+ rapids can be fun, so consider dropping your gear downstream, and playing in the rapids unloaded for a bit before setting off in earnest. These rapids are the biggest they get on this lower section of the river.

In the height of summer, you'll find yourself picking a line carefully through the shallows after the first bend. This only lasts for about 100m though, and past that there's nothing to drastically shallow until Hobetsu. In any case, the river at this point is wide enough that even relative beginners can make paddling errors and get away with them for the most part. When we were there in August 2020, there weren't any strainers to speak of in or at the

SAPPORO AREA

Public transport | The put in at Tomiuchi-bashi Bridge is accessible by public transport. It's a bit convoluted, but the steps are as follows: 1) catch a bus to Hobetsu Town bus terminal (directions available on Google Maps), 2) get on a pre-booked community bus to Tomiuchi-bashi Bridge Bus Stop on the Hobetsu-Tomiuchi Line (穂別富内線). The community bus must be pre-booked by 4pm the day before you intend on using it – if they don't get any requests for the bus to run, the bus won't run. Upon getting a request, the bus will run according to the timetable here: <http://www.town.mukawa.lg.jp/2025.htm>. Call the Hobetsu Bus Reservation Center on 0145-45-2284 to reserve (please be prepared to speak Japanese). As of April 2020, buses could be requested at 11:30, 14:46, 16:15, 17:38 and 18:43. From Hobetsu Bus Terminal to Tomiuchi Bridge Bus Stop, it takes about 17 minutes. For the return from Toyota-bashi Bridge, one can catch the community bus (upon reservation) from the Toyota-dai-san Bus Stop bound for the Hobetsu Bus Terminal on the Hobetsu-sakae Line (穂別栄線) at 07:52, 09:28, 12:35, and 16:12 (as of April 2020).

sides of the river.

In about 8km, you'll paddle through the sleepy town of Hobetsu. Access the town from the river right side just upststream from Hobetsu-bashi Bridge. It's a 5 minute walk to a convenience store. Below Hobetsu-bashi Bridge is a 300m section of shallow bedrock. In the height of summer, some lining may be needed.

Beyond Hobetsu, start keeping a look out for a spot to set up camp for the night. Keep in mind that the river can rise quickly with rain further upstream, so do check the weather forecast for Shimukappu before making any camp decisions. Regardless of the weather forecast, however, make sure to pick a well raised up spot, with raised access to the riverbank. We camped about 4km downriver from Hobetsu, here, but this is but one of the many options along the way.

From Hobetsu to the first weir on the river, there's not much in the way of rapids, apart from perhaps one Class 2 set about 2.5km downstream from Toyota-bashi bridge, here. As mentioned above, the take-out near the weir can be awkward, so make sure to scout the takeout in advance.

TRANSPORT
By car | There's space for about three or four cars at the put in. For the take-out, you'll need to allow time to scout the best spot according to whether the weir is raised or not. Options include upstream of the bridge, or to the river right of the weir downstream of the bridge.

RIVER DETAILS

This route is on Mukawa River (鵜川), or Muk-ap in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is a Class A (一級河川) river, 135km in total length. This section of the river is between 20m and 75m wide , with a normal flow rate of around 1.5m/s to 2.5m/s. The gradient for this section of river is 2.15 mpk (11.35 FPM).

Water level notes: The Mukawa is known to rise fast and drop fast – its catchment area is deep in the steep Hidaka Range. It suffers from low water levels in the height of summer. When we ran it at 53.47m at the Hobetsu Gauge, it was only just high enough for our heavily laden canoes. 53.6m or higher would allow for a more comfortable trip.

particularly in the summer months where Hokkaido is seeing typhoons and unseasonable rain more regularly.

There's no public transport options from the take-out. If you're in a packraft, we'd recommend portaging around the weirs and paddling all the way to the ocean at Mukawa Town, where there's plenty of inter-city bus options from the michi-no-eki and the Mukawa JR train station, both about 10 minutes walk from the river.

SAFETY NOTES
The Mukawa River rises (and recedes) very quickly. With a watershed in the high mountains of the northern Hidaka Range, this is to be expected. Keep an eye on the weather,

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

ONSEN NEARBY
If you're headed back to Sapporo on Route 274, it's likely you'll drive past Jukai Onsen Hakua (樹海温泉はくあ, 520yen). This is a gorgeous onsen with nice outdoor baths. If you'll be headed back to Tomiuchi for shuttling at the end of this section of river, then there's also a super local onsen on the western side of the old train tracks – Tomiuchi Ikigai Center (富内生きがいセンター, 300yen). If you opt to head all the way to the ocean, then the Mukawa Onsen むかわ温泉 四季の湯 (520yen) is our recommendation – they have an attached restaurant, and you can camp in the field out the front. ■



ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guides for GPS files, interactive maps, and extra safety notes: <http://hokw.jp/mukover>




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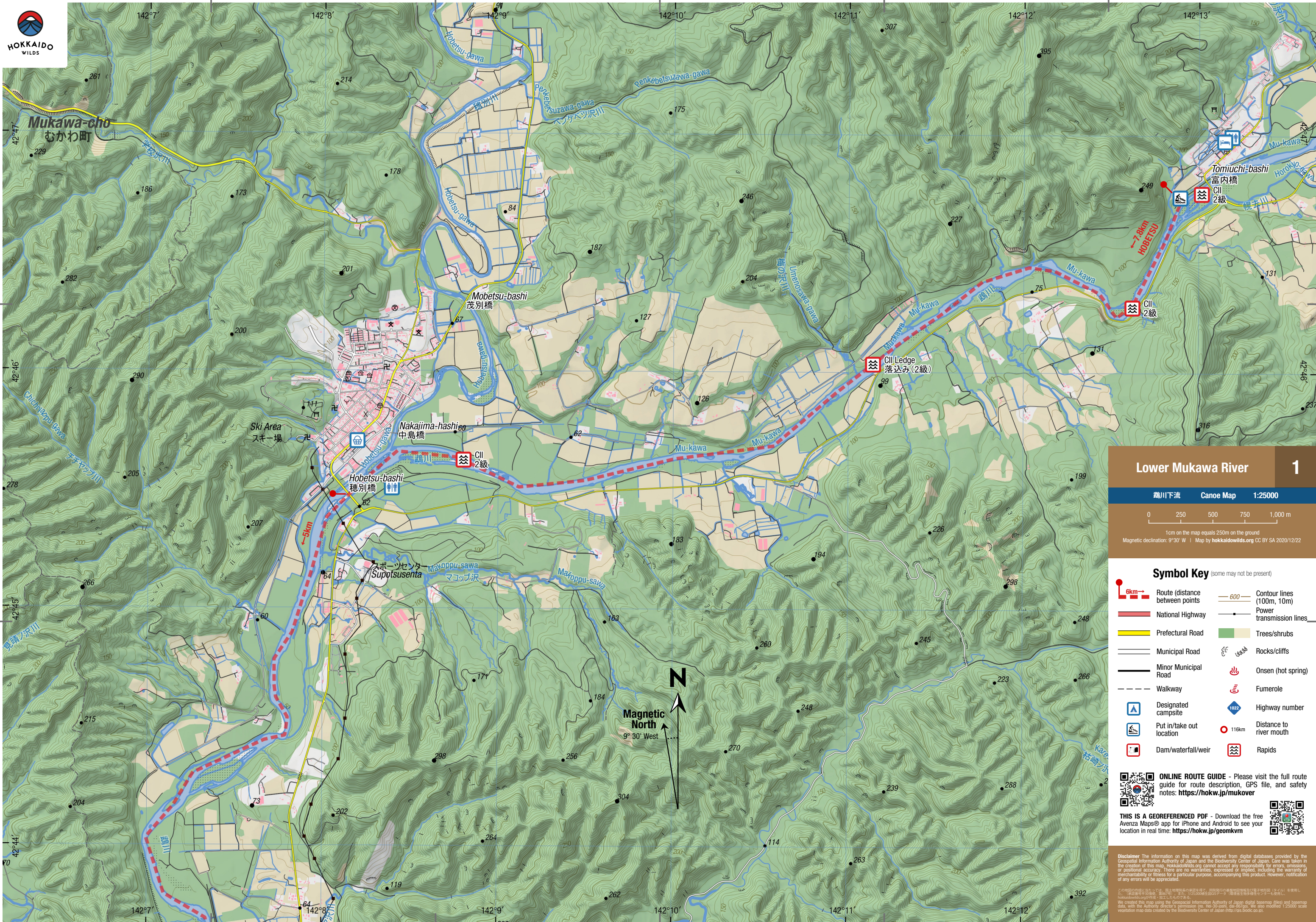
MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson

hokkaidowilds.org 2020/12/23

MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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Lower Mukawa River

1

鶯川下流 Canoe Map 1:25000

0 250 500 750 1,000 m

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground
Magnetic declination: 9°30' W | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2020/12/22

Symbol Key (some may not be present)

- Route (distance between points)
- National Highway
- Prefectural Road
- Municipal Road
- Minor Municipal Road
- Walkway
- Designated campsite
- Put in/take out location
- Dam/waterfall/weir
- 600
- Contour lines (100m, 10m)
- Power transmission lines
- Trees/shrubs
- Rocks/cliffs
- Onsen (hot spring)
- Fumerole
- Highway number
- Distance to river mouth
- Rapids

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





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Magnetic declination: 9°30' W | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2020/12/22

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- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
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|  | Prefectural Road |  | Trees/no trees |
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|  | Walkway |  | Fumerole |
|  | Designated
campsite |  | Highway number |
|  | Put in/take
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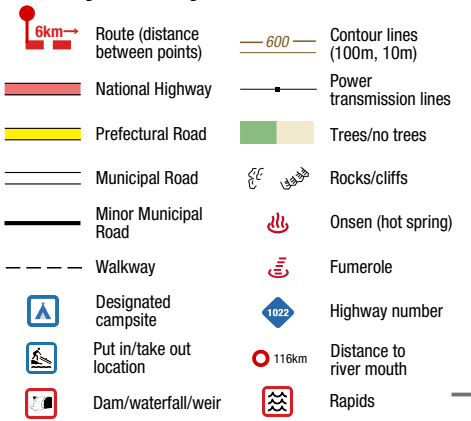
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PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Load your printer with A3 printer paper (297mm x 420mm). If you've only got Tabloid or Ledger size (279mm x 432 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.

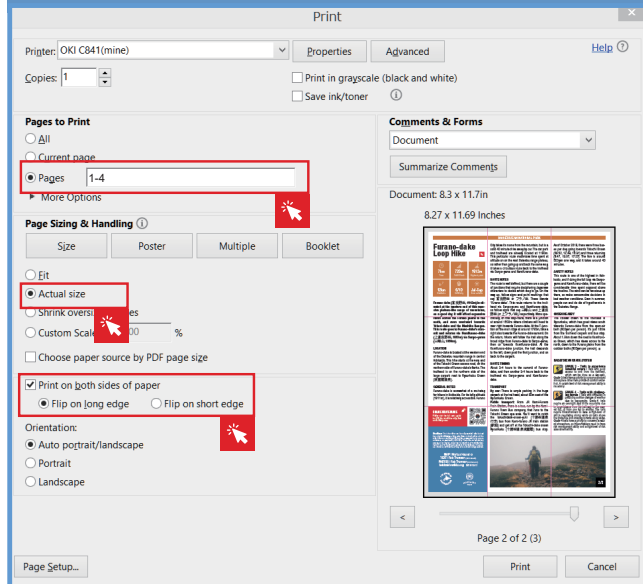
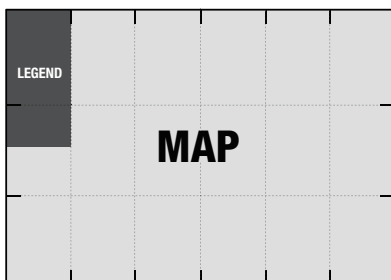


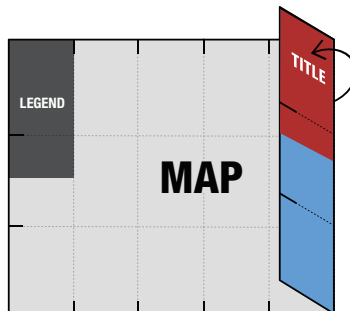
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

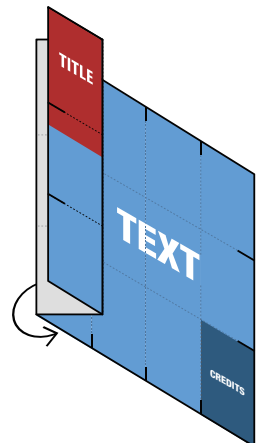
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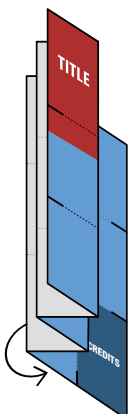
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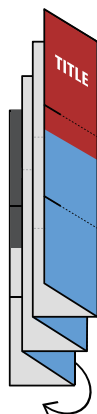
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7

