



Kaede-zawa to Tarumae-zan

楓沢～樽前山 Hiking Map 1:25000



6.5hrs Time	837m Total Climb	1022m Highest point
13km Distance	7/10 Difficulty	May-Oct Best season

Kaede-zawa 楓沢 is a gorgeous volcanic moss gorge on the northern flanks of Tarumaezan 樽前山 (1041m). Hikers will find themselves in impossibly green moss-lined gorges, unique sub-alpine-like birch groves, and gully floors carpeted in lush green ferns. Most commonly used as an alternative access route to Fuppushi-dake 風不死岳 (1102m), Kaede-zawa also makes for a navigationally challenging option for access to Tarumae-zan. The trail is



difficult to find at times, with only sporadic pink tape tied to trees to guide hikers. In this route, with two cars, we climbed up Kaede-zawa and descended to the Tarumae-zan trailhead near the hut, cutting out much of the descent.

LOCATION

Kaede-zawa is a moss gorge on the northern flanks of Tarumae-zan volcano on the southern side of Lake Shikotsu in southern Hokkaido. The hike starts from the Morappu parking area

モラップ駐車場.

GENERAL NOTES

It's difficult to overstate just how other-worldly the moss corridors are that flow down from Tarumae-zan. Kaede-zawa is but one of the more well-known ones, and for good reason. It connects well to the traverse trail between Fuppushi-dake and Tarumae-zan. Kaede-zawa is a well-defined moss gorge at the lower reaches, transforming into somewhat of a labyrinth further up. All the way, however, is jaw-droppingly beautiful, with very unique vegetation, particular to this moist volcanic-ash landscape.

No official trail: It's very important to note that this is not an official marked trail on any topographical map. The trail is marked sporadically with pink tape tied to trees, but it is very important that hikers are confident in navigating on their own using a topographical map. For experienced hikers, you'll generally have no issue following the existing, reasonably well defined foot-trail, but it can be unclear here and there.

Stick to the trail: That said, the areas around Tarumae-zan consist of very delicate volcanic flora – keep to existing foot trails, particularly on the upper portions of the route.

Parking: Parking areas are limited around Tarumae-zan. Only park in official parking areas.

SOUTHERN LAKES

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES

Park up at the Morappu parking area, and walk west for 30 minutes (2km) along Route 453. There's a separated cycle path for most of it, so you'll be away from the heavy traffic that tends to barrel along the highway. Soon you'll come to a bridge crossing the Kaede-zawa – note that there's a number of bridges along the way, so make sure you've got the right one. There's a pretty clear foot-path worn into the ground heading south down to the gorge floor. Duck under the main highway bridge, and you're now walking south along the volcanic-ash gorge floor of Kaede-zawa. The first 30 minutes or so of the moss gorge is relatively easy going. After 10 minutes or so, you'll find yourself in a spectacular, mind-bending gorge with moss-carpeted walls, suitable for most hikers.

After about 45 minutes, however, the trail transforms into a realm only suitable for hikers confident in their navigation and trail-finding skills. The first challenge is to bypass an impassible section of the gorge-proper. To do this, you'll need to find and scramble up a very steep cliff, with the aid of some precariously laid (and rather worn) ropes. Did we mention that this isn't an official trail and all hikers use the trail at their own risk?

Beyond this scramble, you'll be following a rather faint trail through undergrowth marked sporadically with pink tape tied to trees. Back in the gorge proper, you'll enjoy another 30 minutes or so of high-walled moss gorge. Here and there you'll need to take detours around impassible rockfall and cliffs in the gorge-proper, usually to the climber's left side of the gorge. One detour in particular is quite long, taking hikers up and over a number of small gullies before returning to the Kaede-zawa gorge proper.

The gorge walls slowly lose their height, and the middle section of the route loses most relief all together. At around 555m in altitude, there's the option of detouring through a gorgeous stunted-birch glade. Not far beyond that, at the very head of Kaede-zawa, there's a beautiful fern-carpeted gorge, again with a bit of a scramble to get out of. This upper section is where most people may start to lose the trail somewhat, so it's best to make sure you're always looking out for pink tape.

Before long the topography and vegetation becomes much less forest-like and more volcanic. Follow existing foot-trails along spurs to the main Tarumae-zan to Fuppushi-dake

traverse trail. For those wanting to make it a loop via Fuppushi-dake, it's perfectly possible to head up to Fuppushi and down the main Kitaone Trail back to Route 453. Keeping it to Tarumae, however, we opted to head east towards Tarumae, and took the long loop via Nishi-yama around the caldera rim. Expect expansive volcanic scenery, regardless of the route you choose to take – the world's your oyster, but just note that there's no access to the very active lava dome.

In this route here we had two cars, so we finished the hike at the main Tarumae-zan trailhead near the hut.

TRANSPORT

By car: Down near the lake, there's plenty of parking at the Morappu parking area. Note that the upper Tarumae-zan parking area is a bit small, and fills up very early on weekends, particularly when there's a good weather forecast. Get there early – preferably before 9am.

Public transport: There's no public transport to this route.

SAFETY NOTES

As mentioned previously, this is not an official trail, and is not maintained. Therefore, its use is on an at-own-risk basis. Navigation can be tricky at times, so the route is suited for hikers confident of their map-reading and navigation skills. Gorge walls can be unstable; rockfall is uncommon but not unheard of.

ONSEN NEARBY

For cheap-and-cheerful, try the Kyuka-no-Mura Shikotsuko (休暇の村支笏湖). They don't have an outdoor bath, but they're open later



(till 5pm) than any other onsen in the area. For something more upmarket, Mizu-no-Uta (水の歌) in Shikotsu Village, can't be beaten. Their 2,000yen buffet lunch and onsen set is a pretty good deal, so consider booking ahead and treating yourself. ■



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

ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

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



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TEXT, PHOTOS, MAP | Rob Thomson

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MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominiha Gan

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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.

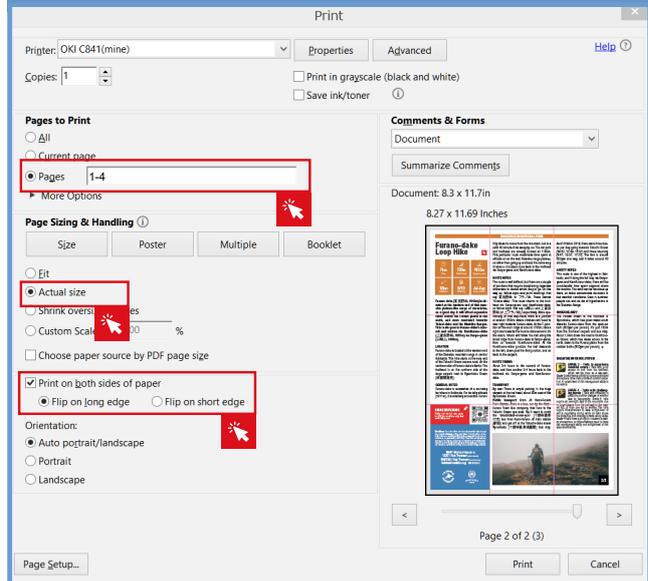
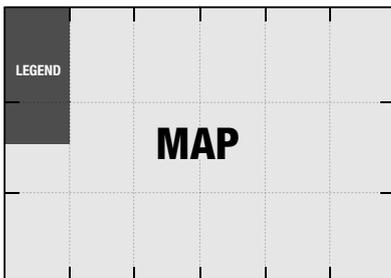


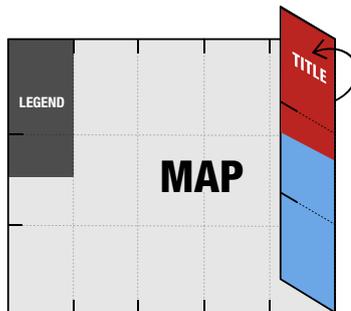
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

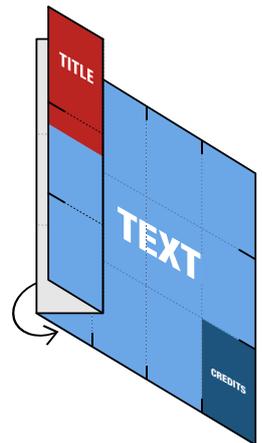
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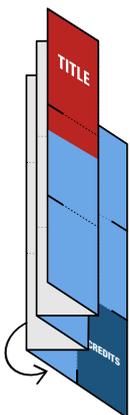
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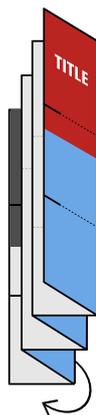
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