


Sarobetsu River


Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu NP

サロベツ川

Paddling Map


1:25000






5hrs

Time




0.05

Gradient (mpk)




Class I

Difficulty




26km

Distance



1/5

Water clarity



May-Oct

Best season

Sarobetsu River サロベツ川 is a slow-flowing wetland river in the far north of Hokkaido, not far from Hokkaido’s northern-most city of Wakkanai. It flows through the mainland section of the Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park. The two lakes connected to the river, Panke-numa パンケ沼 and Penke-to ペンケ沼, are home to migratory geese, cranes and storks, and all number of ducks and other birds. The flow in the river is gentle enough that it’s feasible to paddle upstream, without

the need for lengthy shuttling. Paddle along to the lakes to get some majestic views of Rishiri Island off the coast if the weather is clear.

LOCATION
Sarobetsu-gawa is a wetland river snaking its way through the expansive Sarobetsu Plains at the far northwest of Hokkaido, not far from Wakkanai, Hokkaido’s northernmost city.

Put-in: If starting and finishing at the same place, paddlers can put in at the Otonrui-bashi Bridge 音類橋. There’s a small boat mooring platform and ramp on the western side of the river. If you’ve got two cars, then we’ve heard it’s possible to put in at the Kaiun-bashi Bridge 開運橋 upstream and take out at the put-in at Otonrui-bashi Bridge. That would still make it about a 20km trip, but there’d be less upstream paddling.

Take-out: The takeout location is the same as the put-in. That is, you’ll paddle upstream against the flow (it’s a very marginal flow, if any at all), and then return the same way.

GENERAL NOTES
Here we outline a there-and-back-again option for this Sarobetsu River paddling route, starting downstream (south), paddling upstream (north), and finishing back downstream (south) again. Some guidebooks recommend starting upstream at the Kaiun-bashi Bridge and paddling downstream to Otonrui-bashi Bridge. This requires shuttling through, and there really isn’t much of a flow in the river to speak of, so we figure it’s just easier all around to start and finish in the same place.

Birdlife: In spring and autumn, Penke-to Lake is home to tens of thousands of migratory geese. If you do paddle up to take a look, only paddle to the edge of the lake (where the creek enters the lake) and no further, to avoid disturbing the birds too much.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
If planning on paddling all the way to Penke-numa lake, paddlers need to be prepared for a solid full day of paddling – between 5 and 6 hours is best, to allow for breaks, changes in wind direction and strength, and paddling against the (marginal) flow on the way upstream.

Put in on either the left or right side, upstream

NORTHERN HOKKAIDO
or downstream of the Otonrui-bashi Bridge. Paddle about 3.5km upstream, and you’ll come to a fork in the river. Head east (right as you paddle upstream) and it’s a short 500m paddle to the expansive Panke-numa lake. At its deepest, the lake is only about 1.5m deep, averaging about 70cm.

To get to Penke-to lake, it’s another 6.5km paddle upstream – 4km on Sarobetsu River proper, and about 2.5km on the narrower Shi-taebekorobetsu River to the lake. Take care not to disturb migratory birds. In either case, Penke-to lake is even shallower than Panke-numa lake, so there’s not really much area to paddle – just a lot of bird-watching to be had.

On the return, it’s now downstream paddling, so you’ll get perhaps an extra 1km/h in speed, and a little less effort. Unless, of course, you’ve got a headwind. In this case, it’ll feel more or less like paddling on flat water.

TRANSPORT
By car | There’s room for a couple of cars to park at the boat docks under Otonrui-bashi Bridge. Make sure to park well to the side of any access roads, and take care not to block access to the boat docks.
Public transport | There is no public transport to this route.

SAFETY NOTES
As far as actual river and open-water lake-related hazards go, this route is quite safe. It is, however, extremely remote. Any over-land escape attempt would involve a very arduous bush-bash through towering reeds, with multiple boggy patches along the way. It’s best to assume the only escape is via the river. Hence, paddlers need to be very self-reliant and carry some form of communications (there is good mobile reception throughout the route).

ONSEN NEARBY
We recommend driving the 20 minutes south back to Teshio, and have a soak in the Teshio Onsen 天塩温泉 (600yen) with a great view of the coast. The hot springs are extremely salty – quite unique. There’s a campground nearby (Kagaminuma Campground 鏡沼キャンプ場), and the onsen itself has hotel rooms available. ■

RIVER DETAILS


This route is on Sarobetsu River (サロベツ川), or Sar-o-pet in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is 85km in total length. This section of the river is between 46m and 11m wide. The gradient for this section of river is 0.1 mpk (0.53 FPM).

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: <http://hokw.jp/sarpet>



Disclaimer


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MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson

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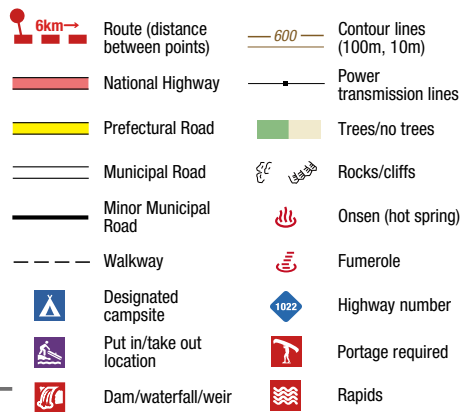
MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan


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Magnetic declination from GRID NORTH: 10°38' W | UTM Grid Zone: 54TQ
Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2021/10/18

Symbol Key (some may not be present)



 **ONLINE ROUTE GUIDES** - Please visit the full route guides for route description, GPS files, and safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/sarpet>

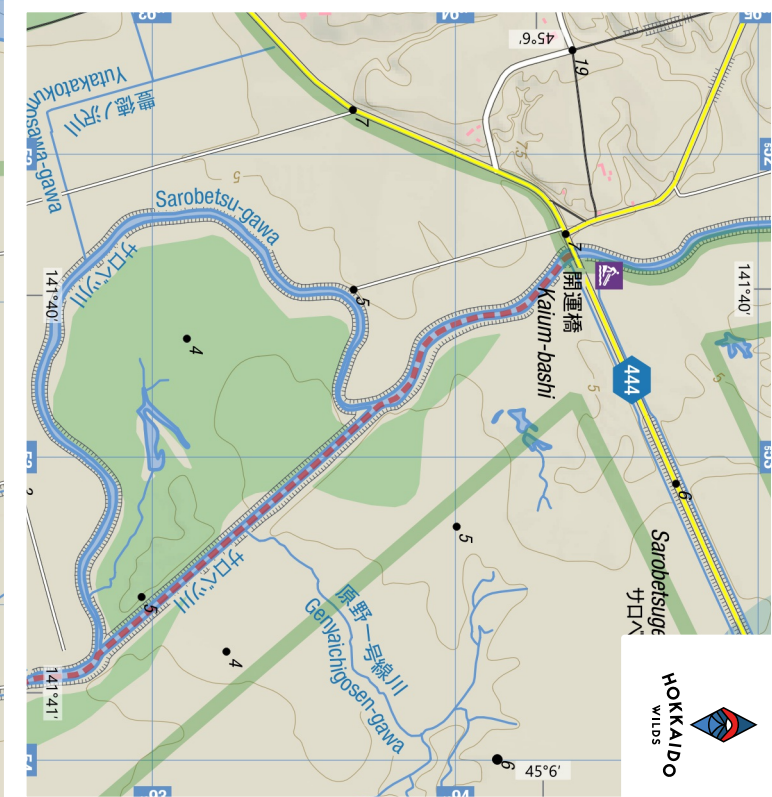
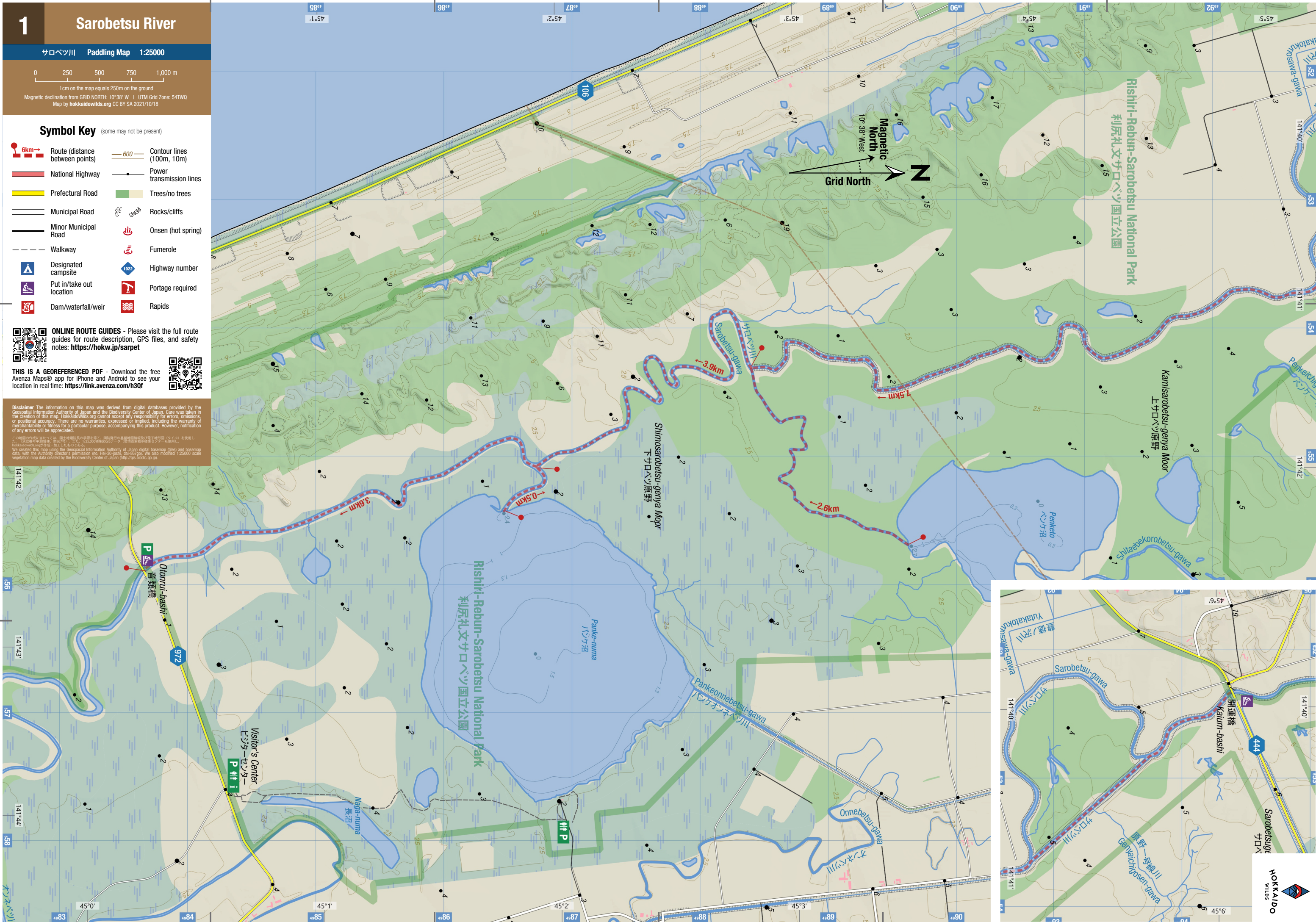


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We created this map using the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan digital base map (tiles) and basemap data, with the Authority director's permission (no. Hei-30-joshi, dat-867). We also modified 1:25000 scale vegetation map data created by the Biodiversity Center of Japan (<http://ais.biodic.go.jp>).



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.



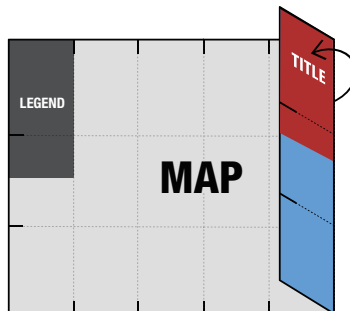
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

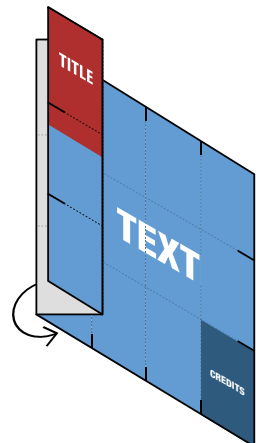
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2



3



4



5



6



7

