



Mekunnai-dake


South Face

目国内岳南面Ski Touring Map1:25000







5.5hrs
Time




1025m
Total Climb




1220m
Highest point



13.5km
Distance



6.5/10
Difficulty



Jan-Mar
Best season

Mekunnai-dake (目国内岳, 1220m) is one of the finest peaks in the Niseko Range, with grand sweeping views from its distinctive bouldery summit. From all approaches the summit is remote, requiring plenty of time and a clear forecast. This route approaches the summit from the south-southwest, taking in some beautiful old-growth forest slopes along the way. The final pitch from the plateau below the summit offers some excellent skiing and is well worth lapping when conditions allow it.

LOCATION
Mekunnai-dake is the first major peak west of Niimi Pass, the “half-way point” in the Niseko Range, in southwestern Hokkaido. This route up to the peak starts in the Yoshikuni area of rural Rankoshi Town, on the southern side of the range.

GENERAL NOTES
This southern approach to Mekunnai-dake has gained in popularity since the 2020 demolishing of Niimi Onsen and winter closure of Route 268 heading to Niimi Pass. Previously, Mekunnai-dake was a popular peak for free-ride oriented backcountry skiers keen to escape the crowds, in a nice longish half-day package. Now, the Niimi Onsen route requires an extra 4km hike along an uninspiring snowed in road. This road-

bound hike on Route 268 now makes other approaches to the peak much more appealing.

One such approach is this southerly approach to the peak. While there are some decidedly flat-ish spots along the way, there are also a number of excellent downhill sections. The initial 250m vertical descent from the summit is fantastic on a clear day. Then the descent off the 900m plateau is mellow but inspiring – about 250m vertical of some of the most gorgeous old-growth forest skiing the range has to offer. Overall, if on skis, there’s no need to put skins on at any point in the descent.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
In spring conditions (March/April), a fit party can expect about 3 to 4 hours on the ascent, and just under an hour on the descent. Add on an hour or so to the total time if attempting this in deeper surface conditions in mid-winter (Jan/Feb).

Park up at the junction in Yoshikuni, taking care not to block access in any way. Head north along the snowed in forestry road, heading east after the dogleg, then north for a bit before leaving the road to hike up a small gully. At the head of the gully you’ll cross a flat section of sapling forest before starting the mellow climb through old-growth gold birch ダケカンバ and white birch 白樺 on a broad ridge. This mellow low-angle terrain is prime downhill skiing on the return. During this climb, you may catch glimpses of Mekunnai-



dake peak, but they’re fleeting at best.

Quite suddenly at around 900m, you’ll emerge onto the large wetland plateau below the peak. Standing in front of you is the slightly conical and very bouldery peak of Mekunnai-dake. It’s one of the most distinctive summits in the range. Pray for favourable wind conditions up here – it’s fully exposed to the elements. Another 40 minutes or so (in spring time) of climbing will get you to just a few meters from the summit proper. The final scramble to the summit is on beautifully rimed boulders. No need for crampons, but you’ll likely need to depot your skis.

From the summit there are views of the Japan Sea, Iwanai-dake, Raiden-yama, Shirakaba-yama, Shakunage-dake, Chisenupuri, and Niseko Annupuri. If it’s not obscured by clouds, Yotei-zan will be in crystal clear focus too.

The descent is via the ascent route. Savour some great pitches of downhill skiing punctuated by a little bit of poling across the flats, and a good dose of skintrack skiing lower down to keep the speed up.

TRANSPORT
By car: There is a small space to park a couple of cars at the trailhead/intersection. The roads around the trailhead are narrow, so if you do need to park on the side of the road, you may need to spend up to 20 minutes carving out

from the snowbanks a few meters off the side of the road, in order to avoid blocking the lane.
Public transport: There is no public transport to this route.

SAFETY NOTES
Once you’re above the treeline at the 900m plateau, the terrain is featureless. It would be a bad place to be in whiteout conditions without a GPS device. The route also gains a lot of altitude – conditions will be much colder in the alpine than down at the trailhead – bring the appropriate gear.


ONSEN NEARBY
For a nice local vibe, check out the Rankoshi Yusenaku Onsen 幽泉閣 (500yen). They’re right next to the Konbu JR train station and have outdoor baths. A bit further up into the range is Goshiki Onsen 五色温泉 (800yen, 10am till 7pm), a gorgeously rustic natural onsen a few km drive up the road on Route 58. It is a must visit onsen for the region, with 100% pure hot spring water, flowing into outdoor baths surrounded by meters of snow. Yukichichibu Onsen 雪秩父温泉 (700yen, noon till 7pm, closed Tuesdays) is on the way to Goshiki Onsen too, so is a worthy option too. It’s a good natural onsen option, with a larger outdoor bath area. Yukichichibu also has an attached restaurant (11am till 2pm). Yukichichibu is a very sulphurous onsen and so you do tend to stink for a bit afterwards.). ■



| 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/mekunnS>




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TEXT, PHOTOS, MAP | Rob Thomson

hokkaidowilds.org 2022/03/22

A4 MAP CONCEPT | Markus Hauser
MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | @welldonegan

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HOKKAIDO
WILDS

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0 250 500 750 1,000 m

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground

Magnetic declination from GRID NORTH: 9°54' W | MGRS Zone: **54TVN**
Grid spacing: **1000m** | Projection: **WGS 84 / UTM zone 54N**
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Mekunnai-dake

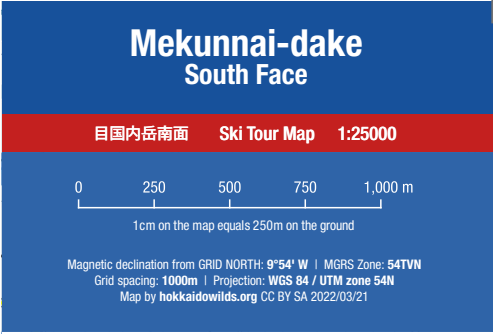
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



















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



















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



















Symbol Key

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | Ascent/Ski-tour Route (time) * |  | Contour lines (100m, 10m) |
|  | Freeride Route * |  | Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks |
|  | Advanced Route * |  | Trees / No trees |
|  | National Highway |  | Buildings |
|  | Prefectural Highway / Gate |  | Backcountry gates |
|  | Municipal Road |  | Ploughed parking / Onsen facility |
|  | Minor Municipal Road |  | Shop / Public toilet |
|  | Forestry Road |  | Hut / Campground |
|  | Bus route / Stop |  | Shrine / Temple |
|  | Ski lift / Abandoned ski lift |  | Hot spring / Fumerole |
|  | Municipal boundary |  | Denomination tower |
|  | Power lines | | |

* Ascent route line denotes technical skill required (adverse surface conditions, very high exposure to avalanche/falls etc).

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

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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.



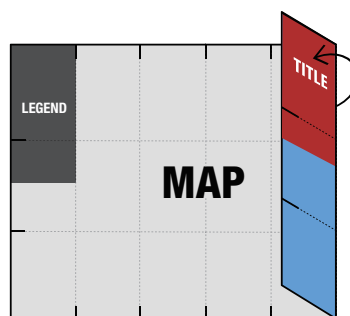
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

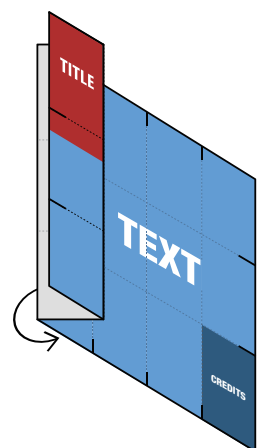
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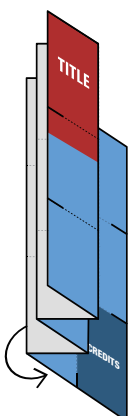
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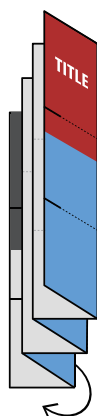
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4



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6



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