



Upper Uryu River


雨竜川上流Paddling Map1:25000





2 day
Time

1.5
Gradient (mpk)

Class II+
Difficulty

51km
Distance

2/5
Water clarity

Apr-May
Best season

This upper section of the Uryu River 雨竜川 in northern Hokkaido is an early spring canoeist and packrafter's dream. With a wetland-like upper-upper section and a rowdier whitewater-esque lower-upper section, it's a great river to hit early in the season to get the juices flowing for the rest of the season. Expect plenty of waterfowl and wildlife along the way too, and riverside cascades cutting their way through the last of the winter season's snow. There's a lovely onsen enroute,



and the area is famous for fresh, handmade soba noodles. The river is not much more than a trickle in the summer (and autumn) months, so early spring is the time to hit this one.

LOCATION

The Uryu River flows south from Lake Shumarinai, about 80km north of Asahikawa City in Hokkaido. It eventually finds its way to the Ishikari River, south of Asahikawa City.

Put-in: The upper-most practical put in for the Uryu River is at the Enjin-bashi bridge えんじん橋, about 2km downstream of Uryu-daiichi Dam 雨竜第一ダム on Lake Shumarinai. It's a bit of a scramble, but it's possible to put in upstream on the river right side of the bridge. Access is easiest when there's still snow on the ground. The high upper 25km or so of the Uryu River is quite benign, winding its way through almost wetland-like terrain. It's not until the 30km point south of Lake Shumarinai that the river livens up. The put in for the lower-upper section is about 8km north of the Horokanai Michi-no-eki, here. The put in here is a bit of a scramble, and there's no eddy, but the river is not flowing very fast.

Take-out: The final practical take out point for this upper section of the Uryu River is in Horokanai township proper, at the Seigetsu-bashi bridge 静月橋. There's a small car park on the river right side downstream of the bridge. The river changes course regularly here, so make sure to scout out a good spot to take out – it'll likely be on the river right either upstream or downstream of the bridge.

GENERAL NOTES

The Uryu River is somewhat of a tortured river,

drained of most of its water for most of the year – while it flows into Lake Shumarinai, most of that water drains out to the Teshio River due to hydropower requirements. Each year in spring, however, the river returns to its former glory, with thrilling rapids and a good solid flow. As such, it's only really a river to consider in the spring melt months.

This route guide applies to the upper 50km of the river below Lake Shumarinai, on down to Horokanai township. This section can further be split into the upper-upper and lower-upper sections, each with their own flavour and character.

Upper-Upper Section (Lake Shumarinai to Michi-no-eki): Unlike many rivers in Hokkaido, the Upper-Upper section is very benign, more so than lower down. Expect a very meandering wetland-like experience with plenty of waterfowl, some downed trees, and a few small cascades flowing into the river from the hillside. Overall a very relaxing paddle (but watch out for some minor riverside strainers and downed trees).

Lower-Upper Section (Michi-no-eki to Horokanai township): About 4km upstream from the Michi-no-eki, the river gets very rowdy, particularly in the spring high water season. Expect rapids nudging at Class III at times, fast-moving water in between those rapids, and generally just more of a fast-paced paddle all around.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES

For a two-day paddle (or relaxing one-day paddle), put in at Enjin-bashi bridge just south of the Lake Shumarinai Daiichi Dam. Paddle

with the river southwards, and enjoy a relatively relaxing pace for about 30km. The least worst location to take out for this upper-upper section is at a concrete embankment on river left just after the Gogo-bashi bridge 五号橋, about 8km north of the Seiwa Onsen. The second least worst location is about 4km downstream on river right just after passing under the Seiwa-bashi Bridge 政和橋, but it may be very overgrown. We highly recommend scouting all potential put-ins and take-outs before setting off on the river.

For the second day (or a slightly more rowdy one-day paddle), put in either near the Gogo-bashi 8km upstream from the onsen, or bushbash your way down to the river from the Seiwa-bashi bridge. As you approach the World Famous in Hokkaido No. 3 Uryu River Railway Bridge 第三雨竜川橋梁 (the railway is now disused) at around the 38km mark, you'll be greeted by the most technical rapids of this upper section of the Uryu River – the Pon-kamuiotan Rapids. Kamuiotan is the Ainu indigenous-language name given to naturally occurring gorge-like constrictions in rivers. Pon means 'small'.

The Pon-kamuiotan Rapids nudge at Class III during spring melt, but for most paddlers can be best described as CII+. The main issue is that it's very difficult to scout them; access to the river is very limited so it'll feel like you're running them blind. We trespassed onto the old railway bridge and used binoculars to try to scout a line. Keeping generally river left of center seemed to do the trick, and there was generally time enough to correct one's line mid-rapid in an open deck canoe. Depending on water levels there may be a couple of holes to avoid, and there will likely be some fun wave trains to enjoy.

Beyond the railway bridge relic, the gorge-like vibes continue for another 1km or so, with limited practical places to get out of the river – take care not to capsize in the rapids upstream, or you may be in for a long, cold swim. Further downstream, the river is much wider in places.

At 5km downstream from the railway bridge, there is a weir that needs to be portaged. Por-

RIVER DETAILS

This route is on Uryu River (雨竜川), or Urir-o-pet in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is a Class A (一級河川) river, 155km in total length. This section of the river is between 8m and 45m wide. The gradient for this section of river is 1.5 mpk (7.92 FPM).

tage on river left. Get off the river just under the road bridge before the weir. Get back into the river about 250m downstream near a small stream.

3km downstream from the weir is a dog-leg bend in the river with surprisingly rowdy rapids – think CII+ sort of pushy waves, enough to capsize an open-deck canoe if one's brace is not on point. From there to the take out at Seigetsu-bashi bridge 清月橋, there's not much of note. Enjoy a relaxing remainder of the paddle. The takeout can be a bit tricky location-wise, so take care to scout well in advance.

TRANSPORT

By car: There is plenty of parking at the upper put in, near the Shumarinai Bus stop and public toilets. There's also plenty of parking at the michi-no-eki parking area near the Horokanai onsen Ruonto. At the put in we've marked 8km upstream of the onsen, there's no parking – park well to the side of the gravel road and you should be OK. At the lower take-out in Horokanai Town, there's room for a few cars downstream on the river right of Seigetsu-bashi bridge, on the top of the stop banks.

Public transport: Both the upper- and lower-upper sections of the Uryu River are accessible by public transport. For the upper-most put in at the Enjin-bashi bridge えんじん橋, take a public bus to the Shumarinai bus stop 朱鞠内バス停 from the central Horokanai Town bus stop 幌加内バス停. Google Maps has directions and timetable information, here. From the Shumarinai bust stop, it's a short walk to the river. To access Horokanai Town, there is a public bus that runs from Fukagawa JR station JR深川駅 (see Google Maps for timetabling). The Horokanai Onsen is also accessible by the same public bus that goes to

the Shumarinai bus stop above – take the bus from central Horokanai to the Ruonto-mae bus stop ルオント前. Note that access to the river is not really practical in the area around the michi-no-eki. At a push, we've heard of people bush-bashing their way down to the river on the river right side, just downstream of Seiwa-bashi bridge 政和橋 – a 2.5km walk from the onsen.

SAFETY NOTES

We'd peg this spring-melt run at a lower-intermediate level. Note however that the months where this route is runnable are still very cold. The river will be entirely snowmelt, so the water will be extremely cold. We'd say drysuits or thick wetsuits are mandatory for spring paddling on the Uryu River. Note also that with the water running higher than normal, there is plenty of ways a paddler could come to grief – particularly getting caught in bushes on the riverside at bends. The normal rapid cautions apply – if you happen to capsize in the rapids, keep calm and just swim them out. Rapids on this route are followed by long spells of calmer water.

ONSEN NEARBY

About 30km south of Lake Shumarinai is the lovely Horokanai Seiwa Onsen Ryuonto 幌加内せいゐ温泉ルオント (500yen). It's part of a larger michi-no-eki (road stop) facility that also has public toilets, a massive car park, delicious local soba restaurant, and bungalows available for rent during the non-winter months. ■

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/uryurvr>



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MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson

hokkaidowilds.org 2023/02/20

MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan



















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HOKKAIDO
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Magnetic declination from GRID NORTH: 10°12' W | UTM Grid Zone: 54TWQ/P
Grid: 1000m | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2023/02/20

Symbol Key

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | Route (distance between points) |  | Contour lines (100m, 10m) |
|  | National Highway |  | Power transmission lines |
|  | Prefectural Road |  | Trees/no trees |
|  | Municipal Road |  | Rocks/cliffs |
|  | Minor Municipal Road |  | Onsen (hot spring) |
|  | Walkway |  | Fumerole |
|  | Designated campsite |  | Highway number |
|  | Put in/take out location |  | Portage required |
|  | Dam/waterfall/weir |  | Rapids |

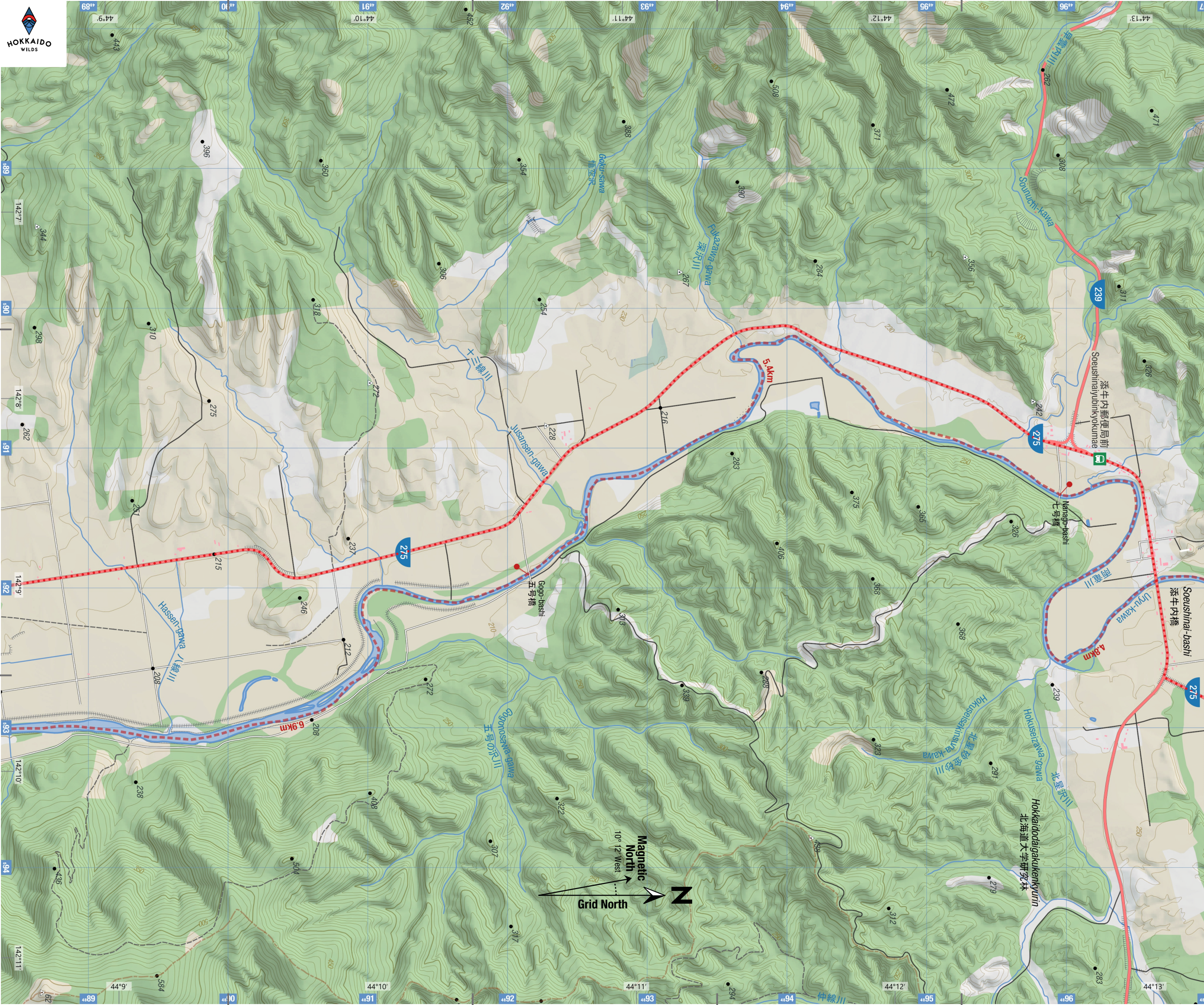


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














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Symbol Key

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
|  6km→ | Route (distance between points) |  600 | Contour lines (100m, 10m) |
|  | National Highway |  | Power transmission lines |
|  | Prefectural Road |  | Trees/no trees |
|  | Municipal Road |  | Rocks/cliffs |
|  | Minor Municipal Road |  | Onsen (hot spring) |
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Symbol Key

- Route (distance between points)
- National Highway
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- Municipal Road
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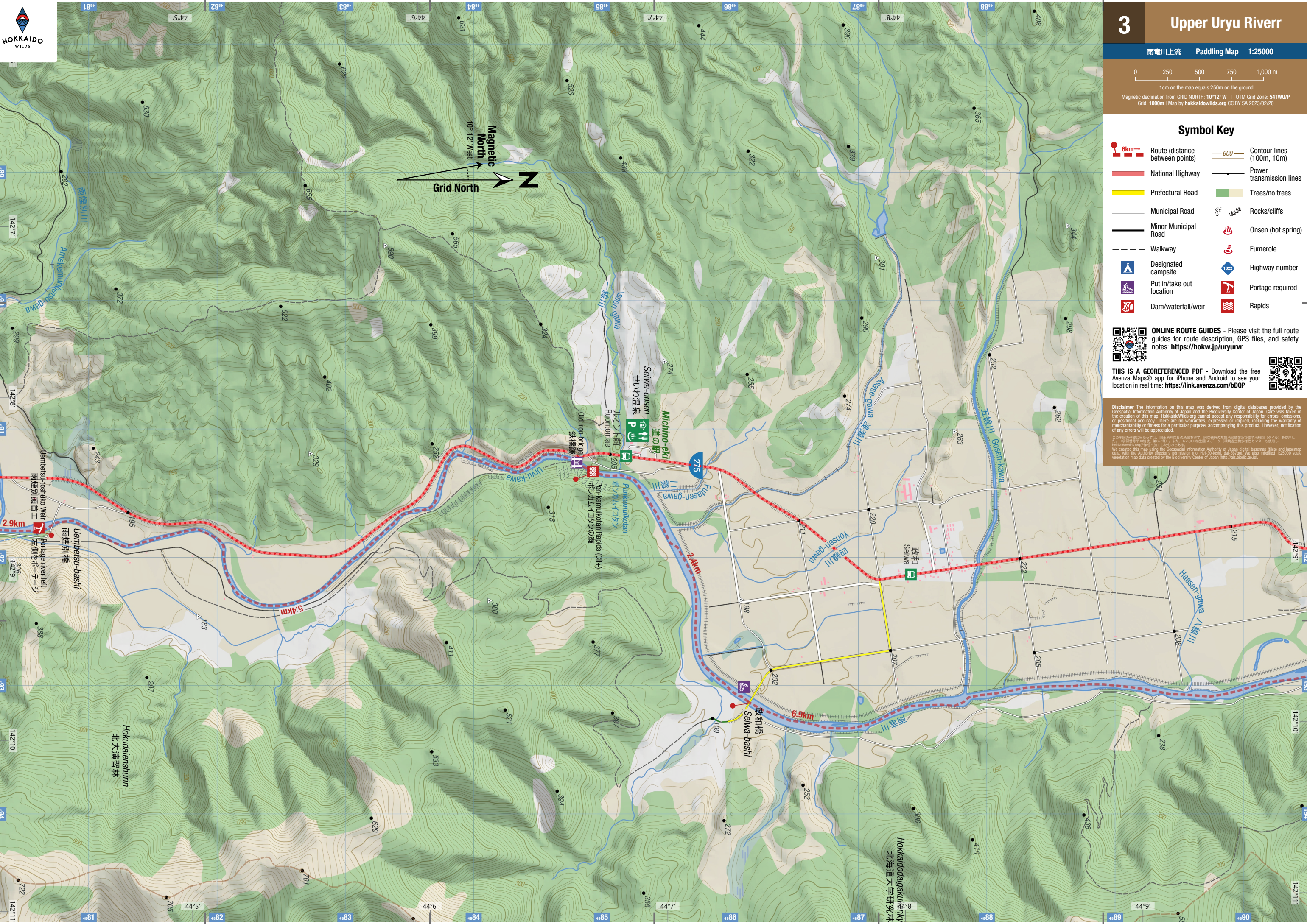


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








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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.

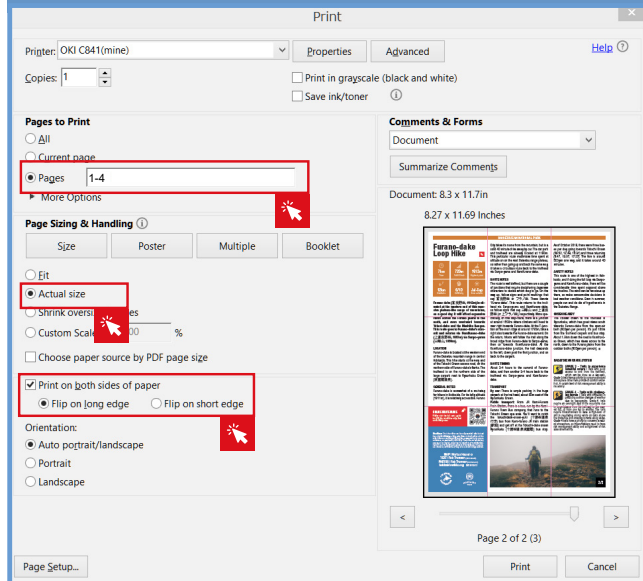
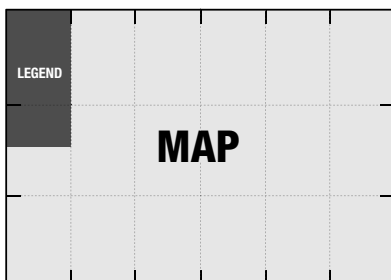


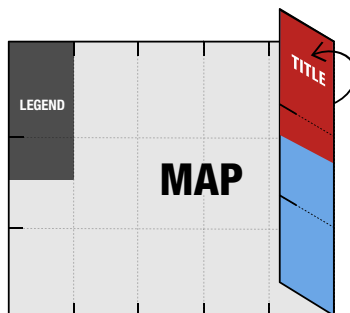
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

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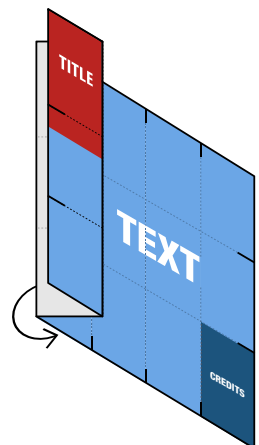
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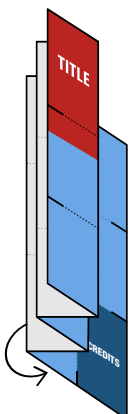
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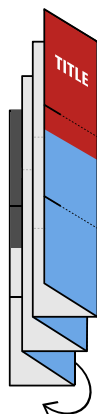
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