



Komagatake


Akai-kawa Route

駒ヶ岳赤井川コース Ski Touring Map 1:25000







3hrs
Time




670m
Total Climb




902m
Highest point



12km
Distance



4/10
Difficulty



Feb
Best season

Komagatake 駒ヶ岳 (1131m) is an active volcano just north of Hakodate in the Onuma Quasi-national Park in the far south of Hokkaido. This enormous massif dwarfs all other scenery around it, as it juts from the sea. For the backcountry skier, the window of opportunity on Komagatake is relatively short. Snow cover is very scant in the area, and spring comes quickly to southern Hokkaido. That said, late February or early March can be a good time to tag this peak, and enjoy the views it offers. In this guide, we cover the most common route up the mountain, from the south.

LOCATION
Komagatake sits about 30km north of central Hakodate City in far southern Hokkaido. It is part of the Onuma Quai-national Park, with Lake Onuma situated to the south of the mountain. This route up the mountain follows the only officially open-to-the-public hiking trail – the Akai-kawa Route 赤井川コース – on the south west side of the mountain.

GENERAL NOTES
“Looks uninteresting,” said no backcountry skier who has ever laid eyes on Komagatake in the winter. Huge open alpine slopes, surrounded by the sea, and craggy outcrops at the top, all add up to a somewhat enigmatic volcano at the



terminus of the Oshima Peninsula. Add to this the fact this volcano is under 1200m in height – being so independent of any other peaks nearby, it looks massive.

The one thing that Komagatake does lack, however, is a reliable base of snow. The southeast tip of Oshima Peninsula in far south Hokkaido doesn’t get much snow at the best of times. Being a free-standing peak, Komagatake is further disadvantaged – much of the snow just gets stripped off it.

That said, don’t let this somewhat negative tone put off a visit to Komagatake. There is plenty to explore here, including alpine plateaus and rocky summits. And the views are really quite amazing.

When to visit: For ski touring, the window of opportunity can be relatively small. Too early in the season (January and most of February), and there won’t be enough snow to cover the rocks near the Uma-no-se 馬の背 ridge (around 902m) and on the plateau. Too late (mid-March onwards) and the spring melt will rapidly strip the slopes of skiable snow. Around mid-February to the beginning of March might be the best bet.

Ascent routes: By far the most popular route up the mountain in winter is via the official summer trail (the route we’ve marked). We’ve seen older reports online of other routes on other aspects, but they appear to all be densely wooded.

Where to ski: From afar, Komagatake appears to have beautifully open slopes around and above the treeline. The reality is that most slopes are dense with dwarf standing pines. If you want to link up more than a few turns on anything but the wide summer trail, be

prepared to bush-bash a little. The summer trail is surprisingly wide in winter, and is a good fun downhill slope in its own right.

Access restrictions: Officially, hiking up Komagatake is 1) only permitted between the months of June and October, 2) only via the Akai-kawa Route, and 3) only to Uma-no-se (902m). There are no fines imposed for ignoring these restrictions – they are in place to keep hikers safe in case of an eruption (small or large). Online, there are countless recent reports of climbers summiting the various peaks off the upper plateau.

Volcanic activity: Since 1998, volcanic activity on Komagtake has been extremely low. The volcanic alert level has sat at Level 1 (lowest level) since then.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
The timing above (3hrs) is only to the Uma-no-se Ridge and back. We hear the final pitch to



the summit proper can be technical (crampons and ice-axes required).

From the small unofficial plowed car park, head northeast up the road past the gate. You’ll spend the next 2.5km or so skinning along the sad, decrepit remnants of unrealized dreams. That is, you’ll be skinning along the main road of what was once slated to be an expansive holiday home development area. Development only got so far as roading before the plug was pulled in the 1970’s.

At around the 476m point, and after 3.7km of pleasant walking, you’ll arrive at the summer trailhead. From here, it’s only another 2km and 400m ascent to the Uma-no-se 馬の背 (literally: horseback) ridge – the official end-of-the-trail.

Beyond the Uma-no-se Ridge, the general public is asked not to proceed due to eruption danger. We will leave decisions to your own discretion. We hear most winter ascents to the summit proper are via a short but steep couloir, just north along the rocky summit ridge.

TRANSPORT
By car: There is a small unofficial cleared area to park cars just downhill from the end of the snow clearing/gate. This area can fit about four cars at a pinch. Do not park on the side of the road, nor in front of the gate.
Public transport: This route is not accessible by public transport.

SAFETY NOTES
A simple up-and-back trip to the Uma-no-se Ridge is suitable even for the most beginner of ski tourers – there’s very little opportunity



to get lost, as you’re on a road or hiking trail the whole way (but do carry maps and a GPS-equipped smartphone just in case). Being a free-standing mountain with very little in the way of trees for shelter, however, means that changes in weather will be felt very quickly – carry the appropriate layers. Also note that Komagatake is still classed as an active volcano. Going beyond Uma-no-se Ridge will expose climbers should smaller eruptions occur.

ONSEN NEARBY
If heading back north towards Sapporo, we highly recommend dropping in to Ginkon-yu Onsen 銀婚湯 (800yen). Right next to the Otoshibe River, it is such a relaxing place, with quite unique hot spring water. ■

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/komaaka>



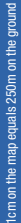
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TEXT, PHOTOS, MAP | Rob Thomson
hokkaidowilds.org 2023/03/08
MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | @welldonegan

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駒ヶ岳 赤井川コース Ski Tour Map 1:25000



Mag. declination from GRID NORTH: 9°43' W (-3" per year) | MGRS Zone: 54TXP
Grid spacing: 1000m | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC-BY SA 2023/03/08



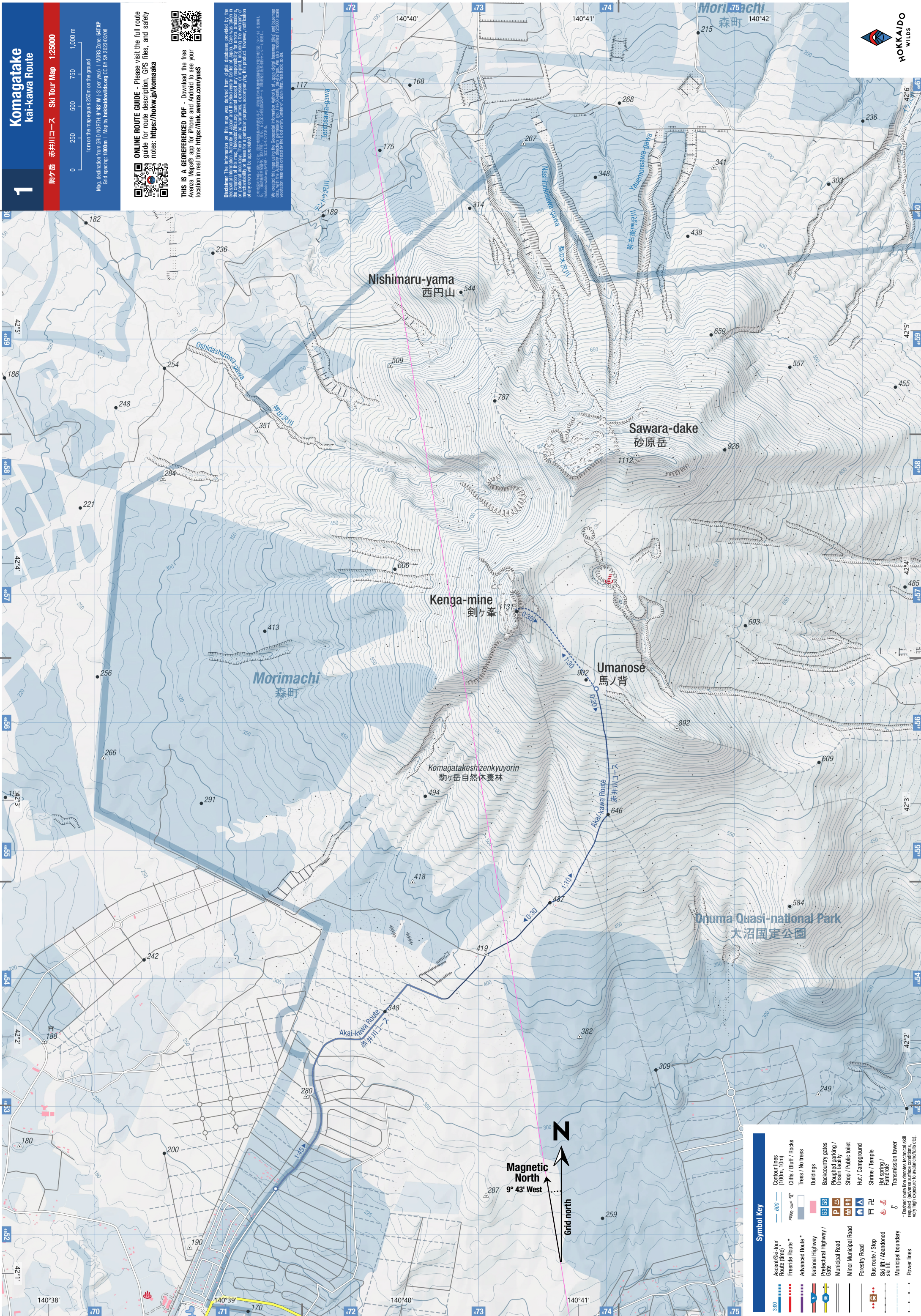
ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE - Please visit the full route guide for route description, GPS files, and safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/komaaka>



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

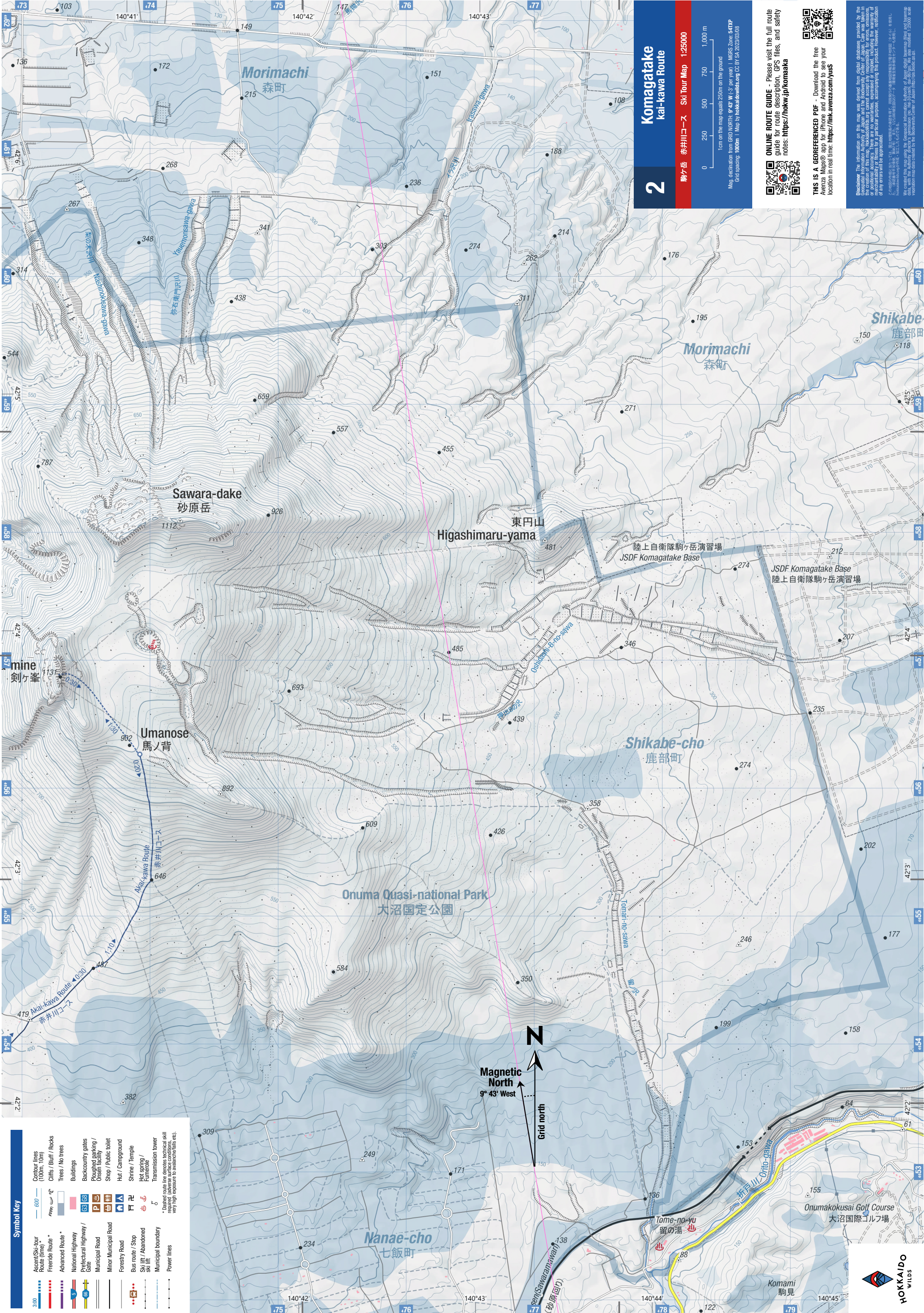


Symbol Key

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

* Designated route line denotes technical skill
required (adverse surface conditions,
very high exposure to wind etc.)





Symbol Key

- Ascent/Ski-tour Route (time)
- Friendie Route *
- Advanced Route *
- National Highway
- Prefectural Highway / Gate
- Municipal Road
- Minor Municipal Road
- Forestry Road
- Bus route / Stop
- Ski lift / Abandoned ski lift
- Municipal boundary
- Power lines
- Contour lines (100m, 50m)
- Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks
- Trees / No trees
- Buildings
- Backcountry gates
- Ploughed parking / Obstruction
- Shop / Public toilet
- Hut / Campground
- Shrine / Temple
- Hot spring / Fumetole
- Transmission tower
- * Dashed route line denotes technical skill required (adverse surface conditions, very high exposure to avalanche/falls etc).

Komagatake
kai-kawa Route

2

駒ヶ岳 赤井川コース Ski Tour Map 1:25000

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground
Map: declination from GRID (NORTH: 9°43' W (-3' per year) | MGRS Zone: 54TXP
Grid spacing: 1000m | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY-SA 2022/03/08



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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.



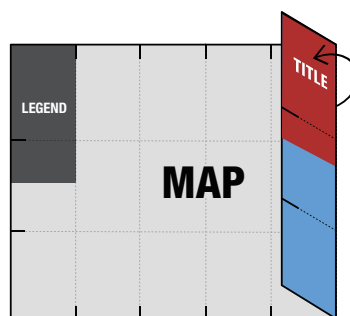
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

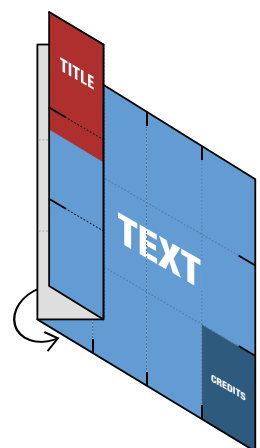
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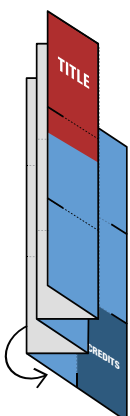
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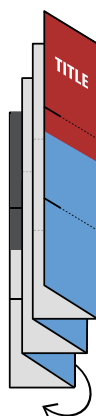
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4



5



6



7

