


Okushiri-to


West Coast

奥尻島西海岸

Sea Kayaking Map


1:25000






6hrs

Time




25km

Distance




5.5/10

Difficulty




2.5/5

Remoteness



5/5

Water clarity



Jul-Sep

Best season

Okushiri Island 奥尻島 is a roughly 75km circumference island sitting about 20km off the far southwestern coast of Hokkaido, Japan, in the Japan Sea. In the summer months, the north and western coasts of Okushiri Island offer incredibly blue and clear water for sea kayakers to enjoy, mostly in the lee of southeastern seasonal winds. Rocky capes, coves, and offshore sea bird havens abound. Windswept vistas give a real sense of remoteness. The island also boasts an infamous past with one of the world’s largest record-ed tsunami in 1993. Here, we describe a one-day paddle along Okushiri’s western coast.

LOCATION
Okushiri-to Island sits off the west coast of southern Oshima Peninsula in far south Hokkaido. It’s about 18km off the coast, and 100km northwest of Hakodate as the crow files. This route is a one-way route, so naturally, paddlers can paddle it in either direction, depending on the day’s conditions. As per Hokkaido bylaws, personal vessels (including sea kayaks) are not allowed to use fishing ports unless in an emergency or otherwise untenable coastal landing conditions.

Put-in location: If you’re paddling this coast in the summer months, you’ll most likely get a tail-breeze by putting in at the southern end of the island in Aonae 青苗地区 – the prevailing wind in summer

is from the southeast. If conditions allow it, consider putting in at the lovely beach just north of Aonae Fishing Port. You’ll need to haul kayaks over a low concrete wall, but there’s an opening in the wall with steps to carry gear through. If the southeasterly is causing the east side of Cape Aonae to be a little too choppy for your liking, you may find it easier to put in directly west of the cape in the shelter of the breakwaters. There’s a ramp down to the water, but you’ll need to haul kayaks over a low concrete barrier.

Take-out location: The most convenient take-out is the small, very protected beach just south of the main Kamuiwaki fishing port 神威脇漁港. There’s an onsen at the port (the only onsen on the island), accommodation, and easy access to the Kamuiwaki Bus Stop (end of the Kamiwaki line; about four buses per day) that will give access to a public bus to take you back to Aonae. If you happen to have transport of some kind (or can call a taxi – see public transport details below), then it’s also worth pushing on to Horonai Beach 幌内海岸 (also referred to as Yunohama Beach 湯の浜). This beach is perfect for a wild camp, and there’s an old onsen relic there – a vertical, mineral-caked pipe still spluttering hot spring water. Note, however, that if a westerly is blowing, this beach can have moderately large waves.

GENERAL NOTES
For some reason, Okushiri Island is not often on the radar. Sitting off the somewhat lonely southern Japan Sea Coast of Oshima Peninsula, it’s a bit of trek to get to from other popular tourist destinations in Hokkaido. For the sea kayaker, however, this island has a lot to offer. The north and western coasts are veritable playgrounds with rocky capes, small rocky islands, and hopelessly crystal-clear water. The locals call it Okushiri-Blue.

Okushiri Island ferry: Heartland Ferries run a ferry service to Okushiri Island once or twice daily from Esashi Port. Check <http://www.heartlandferry.jp/english/> for timetables. Fares for the Esashi-Okushiri route starts at about 3,100yen per person for second class. Sea kayaks can be carried onto the vehicle loading bay, for an extra 1,800yen. Call in advance to let them know you’ll be carrying a sea kayak on.

Time to visit: For sea kayaking, the most reliably settled weather on Okushiri Island is from July to September. During these summer months, the prevailing wind tends to be from the southeast. Outside of these months, expect more wind-bound days.

Okushiri Island Tsunami: In the dead of night

on the 12th of July 1993, Okushiri Island experienced one of the largest tsunami (32m maximum height) in recorded history, anywhere in the world. There were 165 casualties on the island. There’s a Tsunami Memorial Museum Center on the island, which is a sobering reminder of the event, plus a record of the impressive local recovery effort.

Circumnavigation of Okushiri Island by sea kayak: At only 75km in circumference, Okushiri Island is an attractive option for a full circumnavigation. It’s possible to put in just north of the ferry terminal on a small beach. It’s a 1.3km walk from the ferry terminal, so you may want to bring a trolley for your kayak. As per Hokkaido bylaws, private recreational vessels (including sea kayaks) are only allowed to use fishing ports in emergencies.

Okushiri Island crossing from the mainland: At its narrowest, the Okushri Strait is 18km wide, with a depth of 400-1000m. The current in the straight varies in direction irregularly, with a speed of 0.2 to 1.5kt.

Campgrounds: There are a few nice beaches (with streams) suitable for a rough camp along this Okushiri west coast route. There are no official campgrounds along the route that are practically accessible from the coast – the campground in Kamuiwaki is a 20-30 minute circuitous walk from the coast. See Google Maps for other official campgrounds on the island. Camping at the park at Cape Aonae is tolerated (i.e., it’s not an official campground, but people are generally chill about it) if you’re traveling by human power (e.g. arriving/ departing by sea kayak).

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
We recommend allowing about 6hrs for this route, to allow for enjoying the rocky capes along the way.

Here we describe paddling from south to north, from Aonae Cape to the last feasible take-out on the west coast at Horonai (Yunohama Beach). Put in either at the beach on the east side of the cape north of the Aonae fishing port, or if conditions are rough on the east, put in in the shelter of the breakwaters on the west side of the cape.

If putting in at the beach north of the Aonae Fishing port, you’ll first paddle south, around the great masses of concrete tetrapods protecting the port’s breakwaters. Soon, however, you’ll round the low, shallow point of Cape Aonae. There’s a tiny rocky island about 4km directly south of the cape, replete with a shrine, that would make for a nice return trip in calm conditions. The area between the cape and the

small island, however, is relatively shallow, so if there’s a large swell running, there may be breaking waves.

Once around the cape, you’ll start paddling west along the short section of the southern coast of Okushiri Island. This, as well as the first 1/3 of the west coast proper, consists of soft clay rock bluffs, grassy hills, and compact, remote beaches. The coast speaks to the wind and inclement conditions this side of the island sees through the long, tough winter months. Kuki Cape 群来岬 marks the start of the west coast proper. Take your time at this cape, as the rocks and beautiful clear water is a taste for what is to come.

From Cape Kuki, it’s a 5-6km paddle to the Muen-jima coast 無縁島海岸, a group of rocks and capes. In calm conditions, this is one of the highlights of this section of coast. Paddle out to Muen-jima and Taira-jima islands to see sea birds and get a nice view of the island from further out from the coast. Just north (1km) of Muen-jima is Hoya-ishii rock ホヤ石, a perfect spot for a long break. The beach on the south side of the 67m high rock would be perfect for an overnight camp on the beach. While there is a road running the entire length of this section of coast to Horonai Beach, there’s probably fewer than one car an hour that uses the road.

From Hoya-ishii rock it’s about 7km to Kamuiwaki Port 神威脇漁港. The first 3km is a windswept grassy coast, the remaining 4km is a gorgeous labyrinth of rocks, small capes, and crystal clear Okushiri Blue water.

Kamuiwaki Port is home to Okushiri Island’s only onsen – Kamuiwaki Onsen 神威脇温泉. There’s a guesthouse nearby with an English-speaking host (Imacoco Guesthouse), but if you’re arriving by sea kayak, you’ll have no issues camping on the small beach at the south end of the port. The beach is well protected from westerly swells thanks to the large breakwaters.

Kamuiwaki is a good place to take out if you plan on taking a bus back to Aonae Cape or the eastern side of the island – it’s the end of the bus line. If you have alternative transport arrangements (e.g. taxi or bicycle), and there’s no large westerly swell running, then it’s worth pushing on to Horonai Beach for the take out. The beach is a nice spot for an overnight camp. When there’s a westerly swell, the beach can have dumpy waves, so take care.

TRANSPORT
By car | It’s possible to bring a vehicle onto the ferry to Okushiri Island. Book vehicles in advance. Booking online is available in English

on the Heartland Ferries webiste. Assuming your kayaks, attached to the roof, are around 5m in length, the cost one-way for a vehicle is 29,960yen (including driver) – about 60,000yen return. There is plenty of parking at all put in points on the island, and there’s otherwise very little traffic on the island.

Public transport | There are two public buses on Okushiri – the Inaho Line 稲穂線 and Aonae Line 青苗線. They both originate from the Okushiri Ferry terminal on the eastern side of the island. The Aonae Line bus can be helpful for getting back to Aonae from Kamuiwaki. There’s a bus stop Aonae-yubinkyoku-mae 青苗郵便局前 in front of the Aonae Post Office that is a 250m walk from the beach north of the Aonae Fishing Port. If putting in on the west side of Cape Aonae, the closest bus stop is the Okushiri-to Tsunami-kan bus stop 奥尻島津波館/バス停. The end of the Aonae Line is Kamuiwaki 神威脇, about 15km north along the west coast.


There’s also a taxi service on the island, Aonae Hire 青苗ハイヤー (TEL: 01397-3-2339). You’ll need to speak Japanese when communicating on the phone. Note that none of the public transport on the island is equipped to carry sea kayaks.

SAFETY NOTES
Okushiri Island is offshore, and therefore very exposed to any strong winds from any direction. When winds are higher than 15 knots or so anywhere around the island, it’s likely that even seemingly sheltered lee aspects may also be affected – the wind tends to wrap around the island with surprising efficiency. Don’t assume a lee aspect will be safe – scouting, if possible, is highly recommended. If unsure, speak to a local to get their per-


spective. The locals we spoke to also mentioned a strong offshore northbound current on the west side of the island. We thought we felt it when we paddled out to Muen-jima island, but can’t confirm for sure. Either way, it’s unlikely kayakers will be far enough offshore to be affected. Sheltered landing zones are relatively few and far between (every 5km or so) from Aonae Cape to Kamuiwaki. If there’s a large westerly swell running, many of the west coast beaches will have relatively large surf.

ONSEN NEARBY
There’s only one onsen on the island – Kamuiwaki Onsen 神威脇温泉 (420yen). It’s on the west side of the island, in the small settlement of Kamuiwaki. The onsen is situated right next to the docks at the Kamuiwaki port, and has inspiring views towards the sunset from the second-floor onsen. Note that the first floor onsen is small and pokey, but the second-floor onsen is larger and has the views. The onsen is open every day from 10:30am till 8:30pm. ■

Japanese Map Glossary		
Romaji	Kanji	English
cho	町	town
dake/mine	岳/峯	peak
eki	駅	station
goya/koya	小屋	hut
gyoko	漁港	fishing port
ike	池	pond
iwa	岩	rock
kaigan	海岸	coast
kawa/gawa	川	river
ko/mizumi	湖	lake
ko	港	port
misaki	岬	cape
onsen	温泉	hot spring
sawa	沢	stream
shima	島	island
tani/dani	谷	valley
taki	滝	waterfall
today	灯台	lighthouse
toge	峠	pass
wan	湾	bay
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/okushiri>



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MAP, TEXT | Rob Thomson

PHOTOS | Greg Beliakov



hokkaidowilds.org 2023/05/23

MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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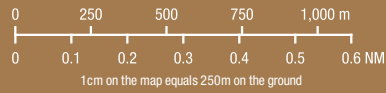
Supported by



Okushiri-to

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奥尻島 Sea Kayaking Map Map 1:25000



Mag. declination from GRID NORTH: 9°56' W (-3' per year) | MGRS Zone: 54TXP
Grid spacing: 1000m | Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2023/05/23

Symbol Key

	Suggested route (distance)		National Highway		Shop / Avoid landing
	Depth (approx.)		Prefectural Highway		Camp-suitable / Water source
	Municipal Road		Escape-suitable / Fishing hut (banyo)		Shrine / Temple
	Intertidal zones		Minor Road / Track		Hot spring / Fumerole
	Fixed nets (month/type*)		Land contour lines (100m, 10m)		Transmission tower
	Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks		Trees / No trees		Bus route / Stop
	Cave / Bears common		Buildings		Municipal boundary
	Fishing port / Marina		Parking / Onsen		
	Lighthouse, light				
	Prono to rough seas / Tidal currents				
	Submarine cable				

*S=sake (salmon), M=maguro (tuna), H=hokke (mackerel), lw=iwashi (sardine), ik=ika (squid), Ms=masu (Cherry/pink salmon), B=buri (yellowtail), K=karei (flounder)

Online Routes and Downloads

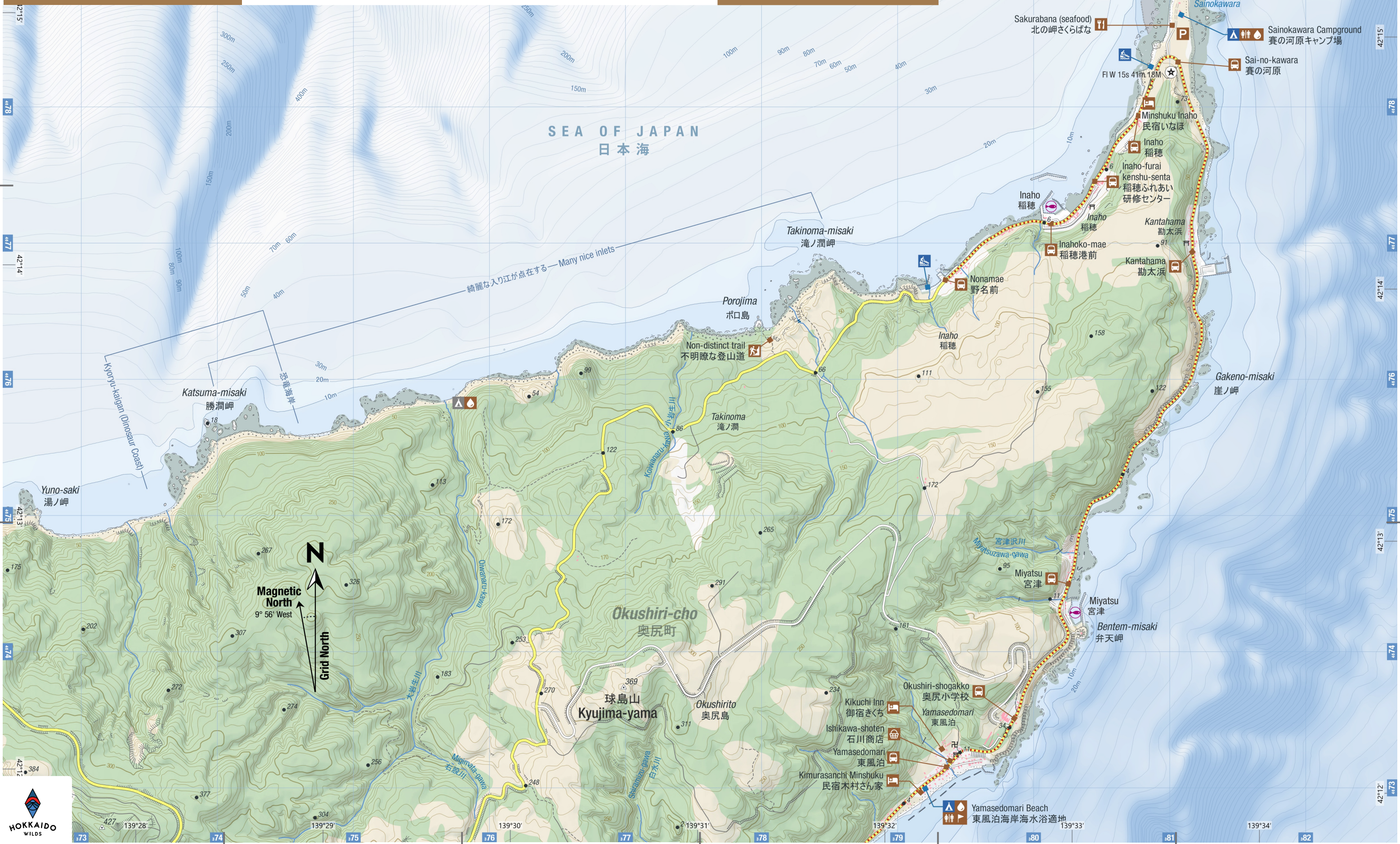
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<https://hokw.jp/okushiri>

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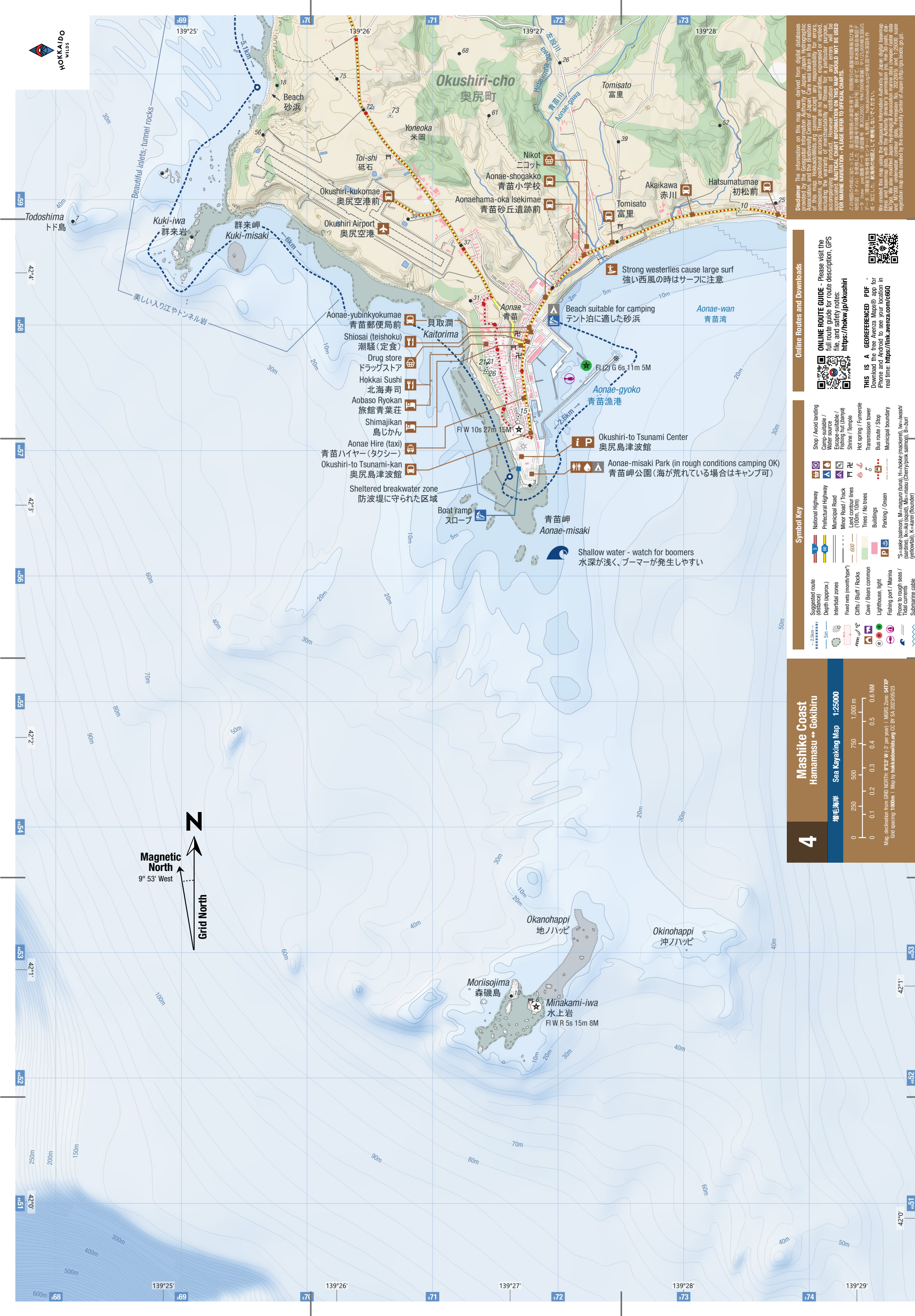
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Online Routes and Downloads

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<https://hokw.jp/okushiri>

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Symbol Key

	National Highway		Shop / Avoid landing
	Prefectural Highway		Camp-suitable
	Municipal Road		Water source
	Minor Road / Track		Escape-suitable
	Land contour lines (100m, 10m)		Fishing hut (Izaya)
	Trees / No trees		Shrine / Temple
	Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks		Hot spring / Fumeroles
	Care / Bears common		Transmission tower
	Lighthouse, light		Bus route / Stop
	Fishing port / Marina		Municipal boundary
	Prone to rough seas / Tidal currents		
	Submarine cable		

*S=sake (salmon), M=masu (tuna), H=hake (mackerel), W=wasabi (wasabi), K=kani (squid), MS=masu (Cherry/pink salmon), B=buri (yellowtail), K=kani (rounder)

Okushiri-to

奥尻島 Sea Kayaking Map 1:25000

0 250 500 750 1,000 m

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 0.6 NM

Map: declination from GRID NORTH: 9°33' W (-3° per year) 1. NGRS Zone: 54TXP
Grid spacing: 1000m 1. Map by hokkaidowilds.org CC BY SA 2023.05/23

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.

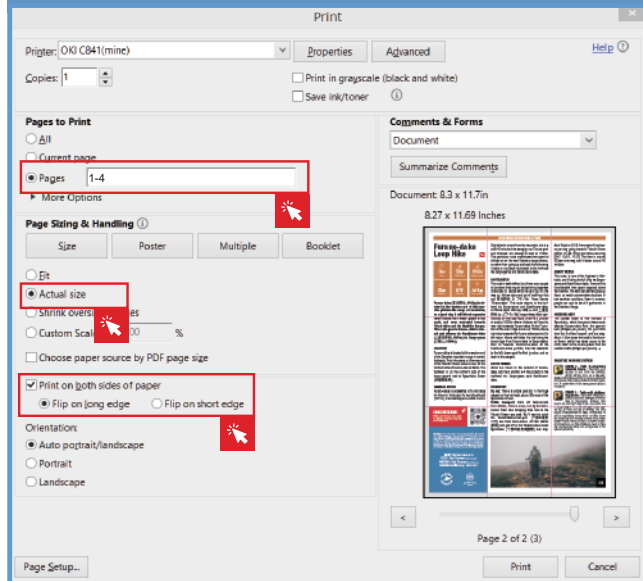
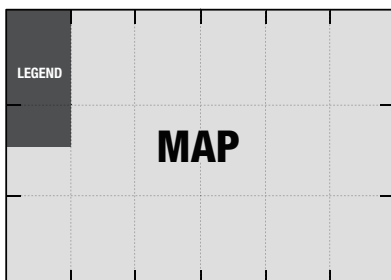


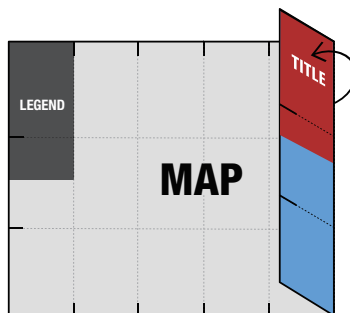
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

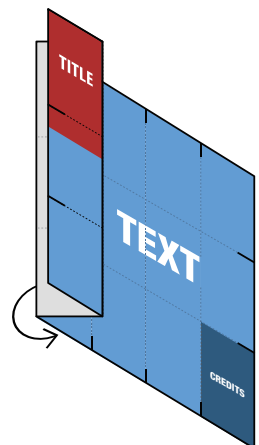
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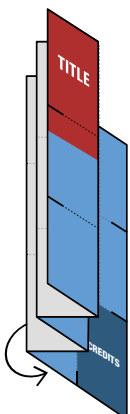
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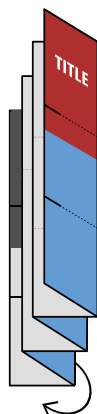
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