




Iwachishi to Horokeshi Saru River

沙流川 (岩知志〜幌毛志)Paddling Map1:25000







4hrs
Time




6.3
Gradient (mpk)




Class III
Difficulty



12km
Distance



3/5
Water clarity



May-Oct
Best season

The Saru River 沙流川 from below the Iwachishi Dam hydro outlet 岩知志ダム放水口 to Horokeshi-bashi bridge 幌毛志橋, just above the Nibutani Dam, is a 12km fast-moving run dotted with rapids. A few of the rapids can have large wave trains on their exits with the right water levels. This is a popular alternative Saru River section when the steeper, more constricted upper sections are a bit too sporty for one’s liking. Similarly, while other sections of the Saru can suffer from

low water in the summer months, this section tends to have a better flow throughout the season. It’s possible to put in further up the river near the hydro outlet, but there are two portage-able weirs to contend with.

LOCATION
The Saru River flows southwest from high up on the western side of the northern reaches of the Hidaka Range, in southern-central Hokkaido. This section of the river starts about 4km downstream (south) of the Iwachishi hydroelectric dam outlet.

Put-in: Most paddlers put in about 4km downstream of the Iwachishi hydroelectric power station, just after a small weir. There’s a gravel road down to the stopbank, and it’s an easy 50m carry from there to the riverside. Putting in here means there are no portages required for the entirety of the 12km paddle downstream.

Alternatively, it is possible to put in about 4km upstream at the Iwachichi hydroelectric station. It’s a bit of a scramble, but paddlers can climb down to the river at the northern end of the concrete embankment. The scramble is unlikely to suit paddlers with 16ft open-deck canoes, as you’d likely need to lower the canoes down the concrete wall using ropes first. If paddling packrafts or smaller kayaks, it will be less terrible. Note that putting in at the hydro station will mean there will be two weirs to navigate – both are runnable at the right water levels, but are also able to be portaged (both on the river right). Definitely scout before considering running them.

Take-out: The lowest take-out point before

Nibutani Dam にぶたにダム is at Horokeshi-bashi Bridge 幌毛志橋. Horokeshi-bashi Bridge is about 6km upstream of where the Saru River flows into the lake. On river left, there’s an access road to a large gravel area under Horokeshi bridge. Alternatively, it’s possible to take out 4km upstream of Horokeshi Bridge in Furenai. We’ve also seen references to paddlers taking out at the headwaters of Nibutani Lake at the Nibutani Dam Kanri Bridge 二風谷ダム管理橋, but don’t currently have beta on exactly where paddlers take out there.

GENERAL NOTES
This lower section of the Saru River doesn’t see as much paddling action as the more picturesque upper sections (such as the Hidaka to Mitsuiwa gorge section). In the right water level conditions, however, this lower section can be a heck of a paddle, with some very big water in places. Overall, in fact, the gradient of this lower section of the river is steeper than the gorge section further upstream. Rapids are very well spaced apart however, so if you do happen to capsize, self-rescue will be less stressful. Furthermore, while the rapids can be pushy, in general the river is wider than upstream, allowing for easier scouting.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
The distance is relatively short on this section, but you may need more time than expected due to scouting - about 5 hours on the water should be a good conservative estimate.

Put in just downstream of the weir, and enjoy about 600m of easy swifts before the first pushy CII+ rapid of the trip. Then it’s another 1km or so to another CII+ rapid just before

HIDAKA REGION
Horosaru-bashi Bridge 幌去橋. Another 1.2km downstream is a 100m long CII+ rapid that is easily scouted from the road above – we’d recommend scouting this in advance if possible. Another 1.8km downstream is a small CII rapid/wavetrain, just downstream of Furenai-bashi Bridge 振内橋. Arguably the crux of this section is the CIII rapid/slider about 600m downstream of Ikeuri-bashi Bridge 池売橋. We’ve heard of people cracking boats on just-submerged rocks (or maybe concrete tetra-blocks?) on this rapid. Best considered a must-scout – there’s easy access to the river-side river left above the rapid. The rapid may also be pushing somewhat to the river right, into the concrete blocks on the outside of the bend. It’s possible to take out at this point.

The remainder of the paddle to Horokeshi-bashi Bridge 幌毛志橋 is fairly straightforward. There’s a low weir runnable on the river left, and beyond that, just a few swifts for the remaining 4km to Horokeshi-bashi Bridge.

TRANSPORT
By car: There is ample parking on the gravel river beds or gravel pull-outs on the access roads to all put-ins and take-outs. The double-track gravel road to the riverbed under Horokeshi-bashi Bridge at the take-out can be quite rough – no issue with clearance, but non-4wd vehicles may struggle. We’d recommend taking a walk down the road before driving it to make sure.

Public transport: There’s a Donan Bus company bus that runs along Route 237 alongside the river for the entirety of this run, making access via public transport fairly easy. For the put-in, there’s Iwachishi Bus Stop 岩知志バス停, about a 700m walk to Heiwa-bashi Bridge 平和橋. Cross the bridge and walk 100m upstream to where you can access the river through the bush. For the take out at Horokeshi-bashi Bridge, there’s the Shinhorokeshi Bus Stop 新幌毛志バス停 right next to the bridge on the river right. It’s not possible to take out on the river right due to a high concrete embankment/wall, so you’ll still need to take out river left and cross the bridge (300m walk). If opting to take out earlier, at the crux downstream of Ikeuri-bashi Bridge, you’ll have a 900m walk to the Nokyo-furenai-shisho-

RIVER DETAILS

This route is on Saru River (沙流川), or Sar in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is a Class A (一級河川) river, 135km in total length. This section of the river is between 10m and 30m wide. The gradient for this section of river is 6.3 mpk (33.26 FPM).

mae Bus Stop 農協振内支所前. Buses run northbound (upstream) three times a day in the afternoons (2pm, 4:50pm, 7:10pm from Horokeshi-bashi Bridge) and four times a day southbound (downstream) – 6:45am, 7:45am, 12:30pm, and 3:26pm from Iwachishi. Google Maps has timetabling information.

SAFETY NOTES
This section of the Saru is relatively close to civilization (or at least roads) for the entirety, so escape in an emergency is relatively straightforward. Note, however, that this section of river is relatively unconstrained by stopbanks. This means that any flood events will (and do) change the nature of the rapids from year to year. In the two years since we paddled this section of river, we have reports that

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/sarhoror>

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MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson
hokkaidowilds.org 2023/06/13
MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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Symbol Key

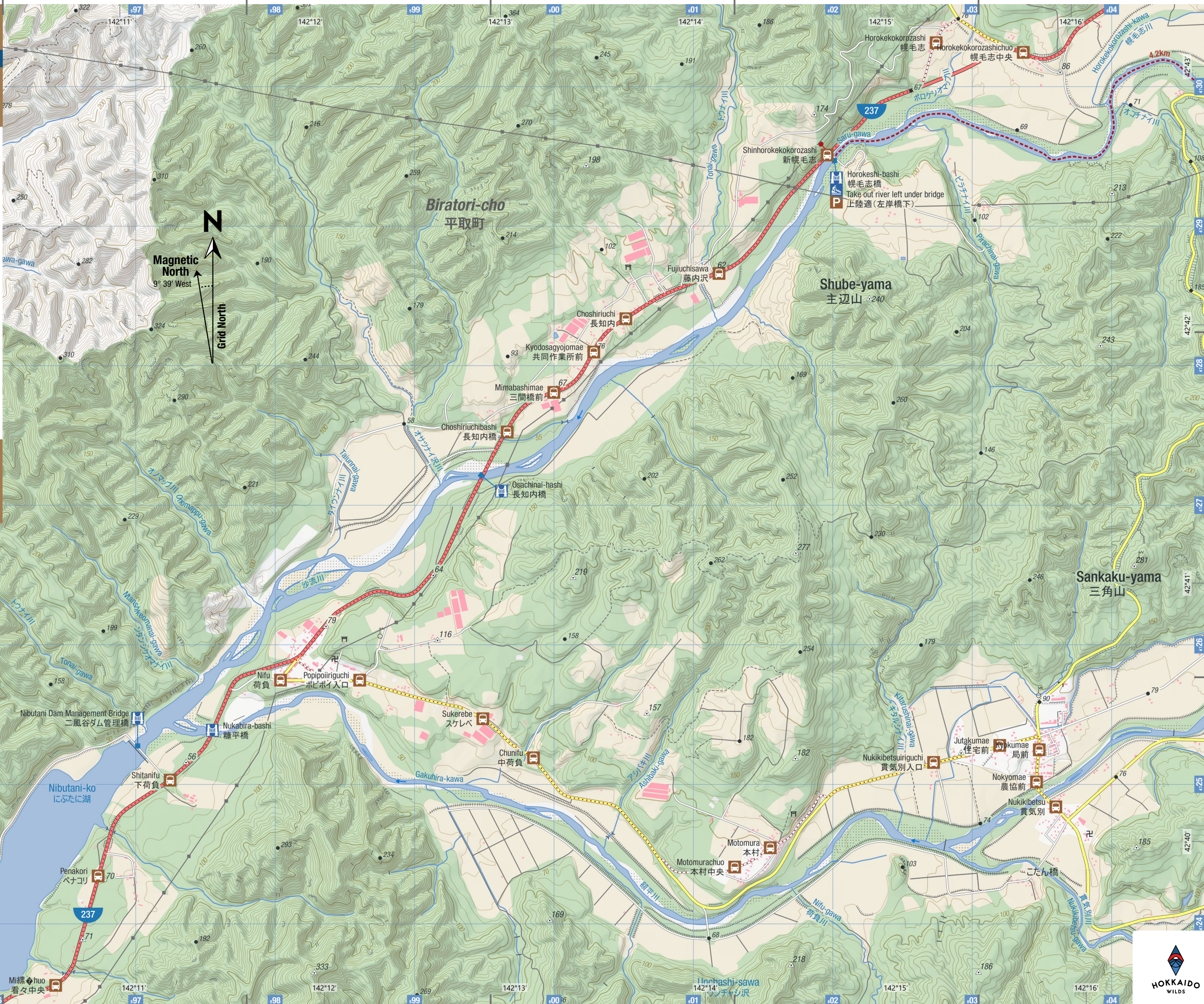
	2.5km	Route (distance)		Put-in/Take-out
	National Highway			Rapids / Dam/Weir/Waterfall
	Prefectural Highway			Portage required/ Bridge
	Municipal Road			Parking / Onsen
	Minor Road / Track			Shop / Public toilet
	Bus route / Stop			Campground / Camp-site (no facilities)
	Municipal boundary			Buildings
	Land contour lines (100m, 10m)			Shrine / Temple
	Trees / No trees			Hot spring / Fumerole
	Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks			Transmission tower

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

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この地図の作成に当たっては、国土地理院の承認を得て、国土地理院の基礎地図情報及び電子地形図（タイル）を使用した。（承認番号平30補発 第967号）また、1/25,000縮尺地図データ（環境省生物多様性センター提供）、「hokkaidowilds.org」の地図データ（環境省生物多様性センター提供）を使用した。We created this map using the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan digital basemap (tiles) and basemap data, with the Authority director's permission (no. Hei-30-joshi, dai-967go). We also modified 1/25,000 scale vegetation map data created by the Biodiversity Center of Japan (<http://gis.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.



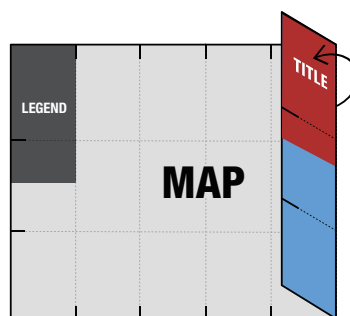
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

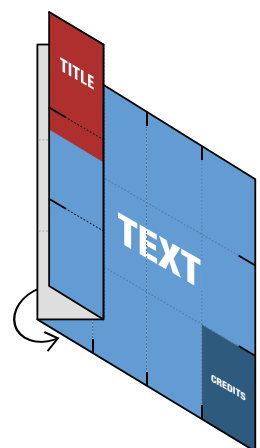
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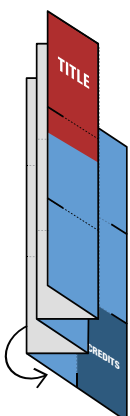
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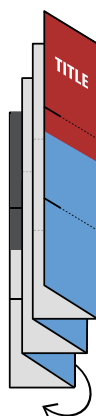
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4



5



6



7

