


Akan-gawa


Ohata to Akangawa-bashi

阿寒川 (大畑〜阿寒川橋)

Paddling Map


1:25000






5hrs

Time




6.1

Gradient (mpk)




Class III-

Difficulty




15km

Distance



3/5

Water clarity



May-Oct

Best season

Akan-gawa 阿寒川 is a pristine waterway in eastern Hokkaido, flowing from Lake Akan 阿寒湖 in the north. While the far upper reaches of the river are clogged with fallen trees and steep boulder gardens, this middle section of the river is a whitewater haven for intermediate to upper-intermediate paddlers. Frequent bedrock rapids and wave trains keep things inter-

esting, as do frequent wildlife encounters. Expect the full gamut of eastern Hokkaido fauna including red-crested tancho cranes, native deer, foxes, and bears if you’re lucky.

LOCATION

The Akan River flows north to south from the pristine Lake Akan in eastern Hokkaido. This section of river starts just downstream of the Soushi Hycro Power Station, near the Yonjuishi-sen-bashi bridge 四十一線橋 to Akangawa-bashi bridge 阿寒川橋 just north of Akan-cho village 阿寒町.

Put-in: The upper put in for this section of the Akan River is a gravel parking area at the confluence of the Teshibetsu River 撒別川 (stream) and Akan River, just upstream of Yonjuichisen-bashi bridge 四十一線橋 on Route 667. There’s a rough gravel road down to the river on the river right. It’s a relatively easy put in, with a nice coarse-gravel beach.

If you’d prefer a shorter distance, it’s also possible to put in on river-left under Chuo-bashi bridge 中央橋, on Route 274. This would shorten the route to about 10km, rather than the full 15km. Chuou-bashi bridge is where rafting tours will usually put in on the Akan River. The put-in here is a moderately steep concrete stop-bank that requires some level of clambering.

Take-out: The take-out is river left under Akangawa-bashi bridge 阿寒川橋, just north of Akan-cho village. The take-out can be somewhat muddy, and is a bit of a scramble in lower water levels.

GENERAL NOTES

For most Hokkaido locals, the place name Akan conjures up visions of deep green forests, volcanoes, red-crested cranes, wildlife, pristine lakes, Ainu indigenous culture, and the great expanse of eastern Hokkaido. That image is exactly what you can expect from the wider area surrounding the mid- to upper-Akan River. At the river’s headwaters is the beautiful Lake Akan, and the forests and farmland lining Akan River – flowing south from Lake Akan – are teeming with wildlife.

Akan River itself is somewhat of a ‘lost’ river for whitewater paddling. We can’t quite figure out why more paddlers don’t paddle it – it’s got some superb whitewater, and generally has a good water flow throughout the season. One characteristic of the whitewater on the Akan is the presence of prominent bedrock rapids with distinct channels running parallel to the river. They can be difficult to read at times, and there are a few rapids that paddlers may want to scout before committing to.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES

It’s best to allow around 5hrs for this paddle, in order to allow time for scouting rapids.

Very soon (less than 400m) after setting off at the confluence of the Teshibetsu River and Akan River, there’s a messy boulder garden culminating in one of this section’s cruxes – a tricky, slotted bedrock drop the width of the river. In most normal water levels, this won’t be runnable in an open-deck canoe and will need to be lined down. In plastic river kayaks, paddlers might be keen to slide down the bedrock on river left. Packrafters will need to have a consultation with the durability of their rafts. Either way, it’s easily scoutable from river right – there’s a very small eddy above the drop on river right.

Beyond the slotty bedrock drop, there is a relatively quick succession of fun CII+ rapids over the next 1km or so leading up to Sanjunana-sen-bashi bridge 三十七線橋. For the 2.4km between Sanjunana-sen-bashi bridge and Chuo-bashi bridge 中央橋, there are plenty of bends and swifts, but nothing hugely consequential in the way of rapids. Pull up on river right just before Chuo-bashi bridge for a break, and wait for the resident cows to notice you. The curious beasts will no doubt wander over to take a look at you.

After Chuo-bashi bridge, the river livens up again for the next 3km. There’s a variety of boulder gardens and small drops, all around the CII+ level of technicality. At the 3km point downstream of Chuo-bashi bridge is a 100m long bedrock rapid that we’re pegging at CIII-difficulty, at least in an open deck canoe. Enter in the center, and work your way to hard river right. ...or at least that worked for us. We’d

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recommend thoroughly scouting your line first – there’s easy access to the shoreline on river right.

For another 3km or so to Matunoe-bashi bridge 松之恵橋 and beyond, there are a variety of CII+ rapids that all reduce in complexity with more water in the river, but all create impressive wave trains. Open deck canoeists will find themselves pulling over to empty boats out relatively frequently.

By the time you’re paddling east of the International Crane Center, most of the whitewater action is behind you, and it’s a very pleasant warm-down paddle to the take-out at Akan-gawa-bashi bridge 阿寒川橋. Watch out for native deer splashing across the river, and red-crested cranes wading on the riverside.

TRANSPORT

By car: There is room for about two or three vehicles to park at all the put-ins and take-outs. Akan-cho village is easily accessible from Sapporo via the Doto Expressway 道東自動車道 (E38) – the terminus of the expressway is only 6km south of the take-out at Akan-gawa-bashi bridge. From central Sapporo City, it’s a 4hr drive east.

Public transport: The closest local bus stop to the upper put-in near Yonjuichisen-bashi bridge 四十一線橋 is Ohata bus stop 大畑バス停, about 1hr 20mins on the northbound Lake Akan bus from Kushiro JR Train station. Ohata bus stop is a 600m walk to the put-in. If you’d prefer a shorter paddle, it’s also possible to catch the bus to Nakateshibetsu bus stop 中撒別バス停 – from there it’s a 750m walk west to the put-in at Chuo-bashi bridge 中央橋. Nakateshibetsu bus stop is also about 1hr 20mins from Kushiro JR Station. Google Maps has accurate timetabling information as of July 2023. The bus line is called the Akan-sen 阿寒線 – it runs between Kushiro City and Lake Akan. As of July 2023, buses run northbound from Kushiro JR Train station to Lake Akan three times per day (10:10am, 2:50pm, and 5:15pm). In summer (July, August, September, October), there’s one more bus at 12 noon.

The closest bus stop to the take-out is

RIVER DETAILS

This route is on Akan River (阿寒川), or Shi-pet in the Ainu indigenous language. The river is a Class A (一級河川) river, 98.4km in total length. This section of the river is between 5m and 20m wide. The gradient for this section of river is 6.1 mpk (32.21 FPM).

Jubashi-sen bus stop 十八線バス停, about 400m west of the take-out, on Route 240. There’s four buses per day returning to Kushiro JR train station as of July 2023 (8:18am, 11:08am, 1:18pm, 4:48pm) – the 1:18pm bus only runs in July, August, September, October. Google Maps has accurate timetabling information.

Kushiro JR Train Station is accessible from Sapporo City via express train – about 5hrs and 9,990yen.

SAFETY NOTES

The Akan River can be a wild paddle when the water is up, but can be equally challenging with lower water levels too – the slotted bedrock rapids could be dangerous for all sorts

of entrapment and may be lodged with wood. We do recommend scouting any of the more substantial rapids before running them. While we haven’t encountered any significant strainers on the river, there is that possibility. It’s a seldom paddled river, so it’s unlikely that any wood across the river has been manually removed.

ONSEN NEARBY

Tancho-no-sato Onsen 丹頂の里温泉 (540yen) is a simple onsen near the Akan michi-no-eki. It doesn’t have any rotenburo outdoor baths, but there’s a large tatami relaxation room, attached restaurant, and there’s plenty of local produce at the michi-no-eki. ■

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/akanch>

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Symbol Key

Route (distance)

2.5km

National Highway

5

Prefectural Highway

68

Municipal Road

222

Minor Road / Track

Bus route / Stop

●

Municipal boundary

Land contour lines (100m, 10m)

100

Trees / No trees

樹林

Cliffs / Bluff / Rocks

崖

Put-in/Take-out

●

Rapids / Dam/Weir/Waterfall

激流

Portage required/ Bridge

橋

Parking / Orsen

P

Shop / Public toilet

店

Campground / Campsite (no facilities)

キャンプ

Buildings

建物

Shrine / Temple

神社

Hot spring / Fumerole

温泉

Transmission tower

電塔

ONLINE ROUTE GUIDES

Please visit the full route guides for route description, GPS files, and safety notes: <https://hokw.jp/akanch>

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WILDS

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.



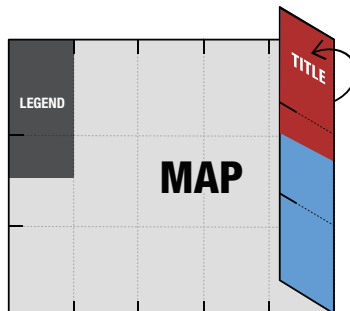
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

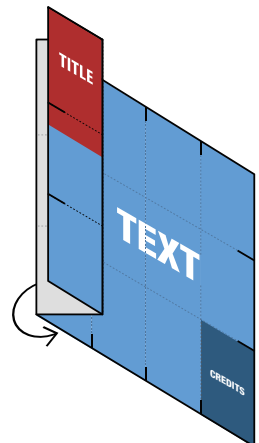
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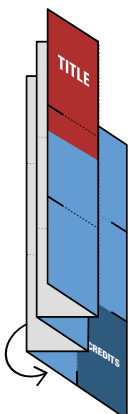
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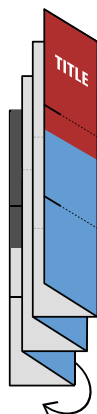
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4



5



6



7

