




Cape Erimo

襟裳岬 Paddling Map 1:25000







4hrs
Time




12km
Distance




8/10
Difficulty



4/5
Remoteness



4/5
Water clarity



Jun-Oct
Best season

Cape Erimo 襟裳岬 is a dynamic cape in southern central Hokkaido, at the very end of the mighty Hidaka Range 日高山脈. Thrashed by high winds for much of the year, when the winds do let up it is easily one of Hokkaido's top sea kayaking destinations. Expect hundreds of harbor seals lounging on the rocks, heaving Pacific Ocean swells, and a vibrant local kelp-harvesting culture. Paddling the cape requires careful respect for local kelp-harvesters' right-of-way, but given the right timing, paddlers will find this to be a very interesting look into a special part of the Hokkaido coastal human landscape.

LOCATION
Cape Erimo is a prominent, rocky cape at the southern terminus of the Hidaka Mountain range in central Hokkaido. Jutting out into the Pacific Ocean, it is about a 4hr drive southeast from Sapporo, or a 2hr drive south from Obihiro City 帯広市. In this route guide, we describe a paddle along the western side of the cape.

PUT-IN LOCATION
Western side of cape: The prevailing summer wind and swell at Cape Erimo is from the east or southeast, so most paddlers will put in on the western side of the cape. Put in at the nicely protected beach about 150m east of Toyo fishing port 東洋漁港. There's a wide set of concrete stairs to the beach. If you're arriving by car, after putting in, vehicles

should be parked in the fishing port parking area next to the small park and toilets. It's a 5 minute (500m) walk back to the put in from there. If you arrive after around 11am, it may also be possible to put in at the fishing port itself, if all of the konbu harvesting for the day has finished. You'll need to talk to the Fishing Coop 漁業組合 at their office at the port, to ask for permission. Officially, as per Hokkaido bylaws, recreational vessels (including paddlecraft) are not allowed to use fishing ports in Hokkaido.

Eastern side of cape: If the swell and wind happens to suggest paddling along the eastern side of the cape, you'll be launching from a surf beach, at the northeasterly terminus of the kelp-drying fields. This is the southern terminus of the expansive Hyakunin-hama beach 百人浜; literally '100-person beach'. There was once a boat accident on the beach where 100 people had to swim to shore. Waves here can be dumpy.

TAKE-OUT LOCATION
This is an out-and-back paddle, so the take-out is the same as the put-in; the small beach to the east of Toyo fishing port. If absolutely necessary, it's also possible to take out at the small beach at the tip of the cape. The dirt road accessing the beach is private, however; unauthorized vehicles are not allowed to drive down it, but the general public is free to walk down it. Therefore, it's a steep 250m haul of the boats up to the nearest spot to load boats. Cars should never be parked in the one-lane road pullouts; temporary parking to load boats is OK.

It's also possible to do a full 'circumnavigation' of the cape, taking out at Hyakunin-hama. We'd advise to scout the surf beforehand, as there can be large dumping waves on the surf beach.

GENERAL NOTES
Of all the day-paddles that exist in Hokkaido, Cape Erimo arguably has the most *depth*. Weather, human landscape, ocean-use rules, access, fauna, technicality, history – all of these factors combine to form a perfect storm of intrigue. With the mighty Hidaka Range as a backdrop, the scenery while paddling the cape is second to none.

Weather: It's best to assume it's always windy at Cape Erimo. Take a look at the forecast right now on Windy.com, and it's unlikely you'll see anything below 10kts (20km/h) for weeks on end. This makes it a just-out-of-reach destination for most sane sea kayakers; if you see a few days of settled weather, drop everything and go, because weather windows in the area are diminishingly rare. The constant wind also means that it's a brutally difficult place to make a living for the kelp harvesters that depend on the rocky reefs for their livelihood.

Human landscape: Kelp (昆布 *konbu*) is an extremely important part of Japanese cuisine. It's only rarely eaten as-is. Primarily, it's sold as a dried product, and then soaked in water to produce *umami*-rich stocks as a base for a wide array of dishes; not only in restaurants but also at home. Rare is the Japanese household that doesn't have a stash of dried *konbu* in their pantry alongside containers of salt, sugar, spices, and *mirin*. Naturally-grown (as opposed to farmed) Hidaka-region *konbu* is well-known within Japan as being particularly high quality.

The *konbu* harvesting season is strictly regulated. Therefore, from July to October, local *konbu* harvesters are engaged in a literal race against time to make the bulk of their annual income. "Every second counts," explained retired sea kayak guide Yanagida-san when we asked him about harvesting culture. On good weather days, harvesters rush in their small boats to gather their quota. Once the freshly harvested *konbu* is on dry land, it's again a race against time to get the *konbu* spread out to dry before natural bacteria starts the rotting process. From 5am till around 10am on a harvesting day, the coast is buzzing with energy; boats revving, 660cc trucks' accelerators pinned to the floor, crane arms swinging, and whole families out spreading the kelp out to dry.

Ocean-use rules: During the *konbu* harvesting season (July-October), the harvesting happens between 5am (sharp) and as late as 12 noon. It's a community-level industry, with area-wide loud-speakers announcing whether or not harvesting will happen on any given day. *Konbu* harvesters therefore have the right of way during these times. As recreational paddlers, we were directly asked by a Fishing Coop official not to paddle between the hours of 5am and noon. Retired kayak guide Yanagida-san advised that most harvesting is finished by 9:30am, however, so we'd recommend that recreational paddlers can aim to be on the water around 9:30am or later, but should be prepared to wait a little longer if requested to do so. "Sharing (the ocean) is caring" here as a recreational paddler means allowing the *konbu* harvesters their space, and paddling after most of the day's harvesting has finished.

Access: Take a look on Google Satellite, and you'll see some beautiful boat ramps and clear gravel sections along the coast that look perfect for launching a kayak from. These are all private ramps for *konbu* harvesters, and should not be used by visiting kayakers. Furthermore, the colossal gravel sections are for drying kelp, so should never be parked on. "Paddlers have parked on them in the past," said Yanagida-san. "They got quite a shock when they got back and found their car totally surrounded by konbu, unable to exit," he laughed.

HIDAKA REGION

The only feasible put-in/take-outs for independent paddlers at Cape Erimo are the beach next to Toyo fishing port and the surf beach at Hyakunin-hama. If paddlers stay at the historic Cliff House Yanagida Ryokan クリフハウス柳田旅館, retired sea kayak guide Yanagida-san (owner of the ryokan) may be able to negotiate a more convenient put-in at relatives' *konbu* harvesting boat ramps.

Fauna: Cape Erimo is home to Japan's largest colony of harbor seals (ゼニガタアザラシ *zenigata-azarashi*), with 150 to 800 seals present at any given time. Keeping a respectful distance, paddlers can see these cute, curious creatures up close. Breeding season is May to June.

Technicality: Given the demanding weather, access, and *konbu* harvesting factors at Cape Erimo, most local paddlers consider Cape Erimo to be suited to advanced sea kayakers. Unlike Japan Sea paddling locations, Cape Erimo enjoys large Pacific Ocean swells, which require confidence and experience on the part of the paddler.

History: The hills around Cape Erimo were devastated in the early 1900's by logging and livestock farming, leading to deforestation and desertification. A massive reforestation effort was launched in the 1950's. 70 years later, the area is a testament to how nature can be brought back from the brink.

Where to stay: The massive parking area at Cape Erimo is a great place to sleep in one's car. There are clean public toilets and even rubbish bins. If you'd prefer to camp, Hyakunin-hama Campground is a 7km drive from the put in at Toyo fishing port. Retired sea kayak guide Yanagida-san owns and operates pet-friendly Cliff House Yanagida Ryokan, an inn with over 100 years of history. Plans start from 8,000yen per person, with two massive meals.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES
From the beach just east of Toyo fishing port, head out from the shallow reef, keeping a keen eye out for konbu harvesting boats; they have right of way. Head southeast from the reef at the port, and enjoy weaving in and out of the rocky shoals as you make your way along the 4km of coast to the cape proper. The coast here is mostly uninhabited, with beautiful sasa-grass hillsides and low rocky cliffs. You'll likely see native deer here and there on the hills. It's relatively rare that the heaving Pacific Ocean swell will allow paddlers to paddle close to the shore, so keep watch for submerged rocks that can explode with wash without warning.

Once at the cape proper, paddlers will be more exposed to swell and reflective waves. If the swell on the eastern side of the cape is manageable, there are three channels where paddlers can cut through the rocks to the other

side. Naturally, it's also possible to paddle the full distance around the very tip of the rocks but watch for partially submerged rocks at the tip of the cape which can produce very large breaking waves.

If you're confident of a surf take-out at Hyakunin-hama, you can continue paddling around the eastern side of the cape, along the kelp-drying fields for another 6km or so. Otherwise, return the way you came.

TRANSPORT
By car | Parking at the Toyo fishing port put-in, as well as the Hyakunin-hama surf beach put-in, is relatively limited. Paddlers putting in at the small beach next to Toyo fishing port should park 500m away next to the small park and public toilets in the fishing port parking area. Don't park on the side of the road next to the concrete stairs, as this can get in the way of local harvesters. At the Hyakunin-hama surf beach, there's space for about two or three cars at the end of the road. It's also possible to drive down the very rough and steep dirt road to the beach, but note that a) the sand is relatively soft and 2) two-wheel-drive vehicles may struggle to get back up the road from the beach in wet conditions.

Public transport | Cape Erimo is accessible by public bus. Google Maps has up-to-date timetabling information. The closest bus stop to the put-in at Toyo fishing port is Aburakoma bus stop 油駒バス停. It's a 10-minute (700m) walk from the put-in. From Obihiro JR train station 帯広駅, it's a 4hr bus journey to Aburakoma bus stop, with one transfer in Hiroo Town 広尾町 along the way. There are three buses per day from Obihiro – see Google Maps for options. There's also a bus stop at Cape Erimo itself – Erimo-misaki bus stop 襟裳岬バス停.

SAFETY NOTES
Cape Erimo is arguably Hokkaido's most exposed paddling location. Approaches to the cape from the put-ins (particularly the western side) are relatively sheltered from the relentless Pacific Ocean swells and wind, but the cape itself is quite merciless. Paddling here should be done with very careful consultation with the weather forecast. Very thick fog, often not in the forecast, is also a hazard at the cape. Konbu harvests go ahead regardless of fog, so kayakers would be advised not to paddle in thick fog, regardless of timing. Konbu harvest boats can be active at any time of day, not just the main 5am-noon harvest time. If paddling in a group, keep together in a pod as much is practical, and pause if a konbu boat is readying to exit from their harvesting location. Overall, sea kayakers are relatively uncommon at the cape, so it's best to assume konbu harvesting vessels neither expect to see you nor have seen you.

ONSEN NEARBY
The only nearby place for a post-paddle soak is the community sento public baths near the Hyakunin-hama Campground – the Tomabetsu Ikoi-no-yu Chipu public baths とまべつ憩いの湯ちっぷ (400yen). It's open from 11am till 7pm (8pm in July, August, September). It's a very simple one-bath sento with cold plunge pool. They supply bars of soap, but there's no shampoo. ■



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

ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guides for GPS files, interactive maps, and extra safety notes: <http://hokw.jp/erimo>



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MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

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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.

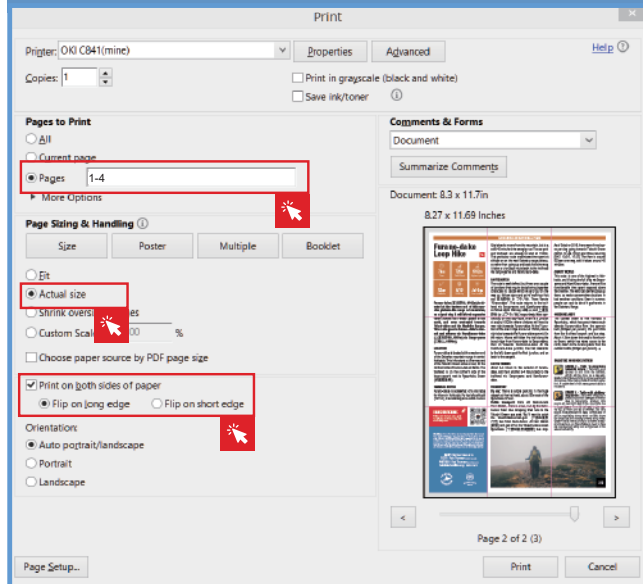
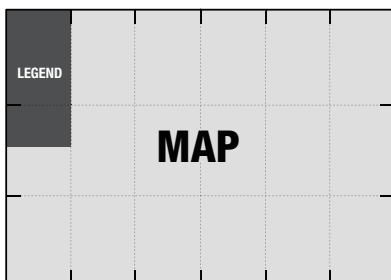


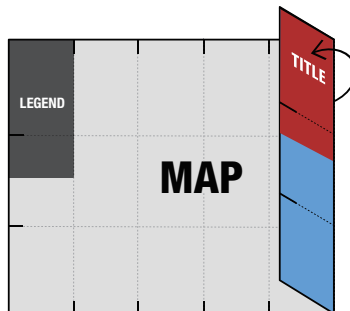
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

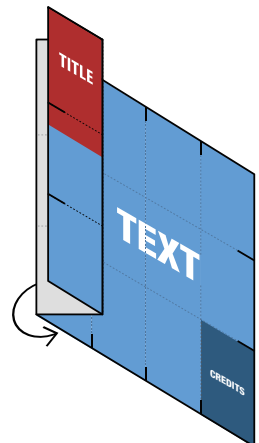
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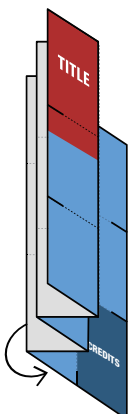
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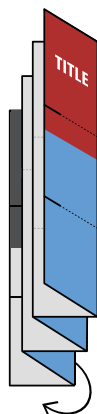
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