




# Lake Shikotsu Circumnavigation

支笏湖一周   Paddling Map   1:25000







10.5hrs  
Time




41km  
Distance




8/10  
Difficulty



4/5  
Remoteness



5/5  
Water clarity



Jun-Oct  
Best season

Lake Shikotsu 支笏湖 is a pristine caldera lake in southwestern Hokkaido. Situated in the Shikotsu-Toya National Park 支笏洞爺国立公園 and surrounded by beautiful native forest, it's Japan's second deepest lake topping out at 360m (265m average). This 40km paddling circumnavigation of the lake takes in everything the lake has to offer - beautifully remote coves, lakeside hot springs, dense forest, mesmerizing underwater cliffs, and crystal clear water. Given the fickle and unpredictable weather in the Lake Shikotsu area, this full circumnavigation shouldn't be attempted without careful planning, but for fit paddlers in efficient watercraft, this can be an amazing long day out. Also suitable for a two-day overnight paddle.

**LOCATION**  
Lake Shikotsu is about 40km southwest of Sapporo City in southwest Hokkaido. It's just a 30-minute drive from



Hokkaido's international airport in Chitose City.

**Put-in location:** There are four official watersport put-in locations on Lake Shikotsu, as per the Lake Shikotsu Rules: Poropinai Beach (free), Lake Shikotsu Village (500yen), Morappu Campground (700yen), and Bifue Campground (1000yen). If you're planning to paddle the full circumnavigation in one day without staying overnight at the campgrounds, Poropinai is the only feasible place to put in. That is to say, most paddlers will need to be pushing off in the morning at around 5am or earlier in order to make the most of daylight hours. The Lake Shikotsu Village parking area doesn't open until around 9am, and the campgrounds don't open to day visitors until 7am or later. The Poropinai parking area is open 24hrs a day.

**Take-out location:** For the full circumnavigation, you'll obviously take out at the same spot as you put in. If you do need to bail out at any point, the only places to do that are the eastern and southern shorelines (in addition to Bifue Campground at the southern end of the western shoreline). The eastern shoreline has National Highway 453 running north/south right next to the shoreline, and the southern shoreline has National Highway 453 running east/west. Both roadways are accessible via a short scramble from the shoreline, where it would be possible to hitch-hike back to your vehicle (hitch-hiking will take a long time to catch a ride). It's important to note that the western and northern shorelines of Lake Shikotsu are not accessible by road. They are very remote shorelines with no option of escape overland.

**GENERAL NOTES**  
For the long-distance paddler, the shoreline of Lake Shikotsu should be a very tantalizing thing. It's difficult to express fully just how

diverse and dynamic this shoreline and body of water is. The lake itself can be mirror-smooth at one moment, and heaving with whitecaps the next. The shoreline is close to civilization at one moment, and the next it's seriously remote forest. There's a hot spring here, a pristine river there, and a derelict hotel in a far remote corner of the lake replete with a taxidermied grown bear still standing in the lobby.

**Difficulty:** Besides the distance, a full circumnavigation of Lake Shikotsu is quite a complex undertaking due to the predictable nature of the weather and surface conditions of the lake. See the 'Satefy Notes' below for details.

**Camping:** If planning to make this into an overnight paddle, we recommend staying at one of the official campgrounds on the lakeshore (Bifue Campground or Morappu Campground). It is also possible to sleep over anywhere along the shoreline, but National Park laws stipulate that tents are not allowed outside of official campgrounds. So, if you plan to stay somewhere other than the campgrounds, make it a simple bivvy, rather than pitching tents.



## SOUTHERN LAKES

### ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES

Including frequent breaks, this full navigation will take most paddling-fit paddlers in an efficient sea kayak about 9-10 hours to complete. There are camping options along the way (both official campsites and beaches suitable for sleeping rough), so it would be possible to split this paddle into two or even three days.

Here, we assume starting from Poropinai and paddling clockwise around the lake. Paddlers should decide where to start and which direction to paddle based on the weather forecast for the day. The 7km from Poropinai to Lake Shikotsu Village is arguably the least beautiful section of the circumnavigation – National Highway 453 is the shoreline, and traffic can be heavy particularly on weekends. If at all possible, paddle this stretch as early in the day as possible to avoid the traffic noise. That said, this stretch of shoreline does have great views of the crater of Eniwa-dake 恵庭岳 (1320m) and gives your first glimpses of the steaming volcanic summit of Tarumae-zan 樽前山 (1022m).

In a fast sea kayak, Poropinai to Lake Shikotsu Village will take just over an hour. Lake Shikotsu Village is a nice spot for a toilet break – there's a public toilet near the mouth of Chitose River. In another 3km you'll be at the popular Morappu Campground beach. Keep your eyes out along this section between Lake Shikotsu Village and Morappu Campground for impressive underwater cliffs. The speed at which the lake deepens from the shoreline is quite incredible, and the water clarity is often incredible.

If you're paddling on a weekend day, Morappu Campground will likely be heaving with campers, so you may be motivated to just keep paddling past and on to the deserted beach about 3km west of Morappu Campground. It's marked as the *Former U.S. military water training camp site* on Google Maps. This curious beach has railway rails leading into the water, with a large boat-launching rail trailer still sitting high up on the shoreline. It's worth a stop to stretch the legs and take some photos.

The southern shoreline has the busy National Highway 453 running along the length of it, but it's far enough from the lake not to see it. You'll likely hear traffic, but it's not too overwhelming, particularly on weekdays. 5.5km west from the 'Water Training Camp' is a small beach that is good for another break. Just as you might be getting a bit sick of the background traffic noise of the busy National Highway 453, it disappears into a tunnel about 3.5km west of the small beach. There are a few nice cascades and creeks flowing into the



lake here.

You're now approaching the more remote half of the paddle. At the far western end of the lake is the Bifue Campground, and beyond this, paddlers will essentially be on their own – no longer will paddlers have an easy escape from the lake should anything go wrong. In the same way, however, the remaining 20km are arguably the most captivating of the entire paddle. There's the remote Okotan settlement with it's derelict campground and lodge, some low cliffs on the shoreline, a natural hotspring seeping from the lakeside, and finally the lake-side Marukoma Onsen and hotel.

### TRANSPORT

**By car** | There is ample free parking at the Poropinai parking area, accessible by vehicle from Chitose City (from the east) or Sapporo City (from the north). The other put-ins (Lake Shikotsu Village, Morappu Campground, Bifue Campground) also all have plenty of parking, but require parking fees to be paid.

**Public transport** | Poropinai at the northeastern corner of the lake is not accessible by public transport. Lake Shikotsu Village is, however (Shikotsuko Bus Stop 支笏湖バス停). Buses run from Chitose JR Train Station 4-6 times a day. Google Maps has up to date timetables. The trip takes about 45 minutes, and costs 930yen one way. The bus stop at Lake Shikot-

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

su Village is about 10 minutes walk from the lake edge.

### SAFETY NOTES

With considerable fetch along the length of the lake, even a moderate wind can whip up waves that will make forward progress extremely challenging in watercraft such as open-deck canoes and/or packrafts. Strong winds and breaking waves on the beam will make paddling very difficult and dangerous. People have died on Lake Shikotsu after being blown offshore and tipped out of their vessel. Water temperature in Lake Shikotsu is cold, particularly early in the season: 5.5°C in May, 10°C in June, 16°C in July, 20°C in August.

### ONSEN NEARBY

Bring shovels, and dig your own onsen hole in the gravel at the small beach about 4km west of Poropinai – the water is warm enough to have a nice soak. If you can get back to Poropinai before 3pm, then consider visiting Marukoma Onsen (丸駒温泉, 1,000yen per person, location), which has an amazing lake-side open-air bath that changes in depth according to the current water level in Lake Shikotsu. ■

### ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guides for GPS files, interactive maps, and extra safety notes: <https://bit.ly/shikotcjr>



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### MAP, TEXT, PHOTOS | Rob Thomson

[hokkaidowilds.org](https://hokkaidowilds.org) 2023/11/20

MAP FOLD & LAYOUT CONCEPT | Dominika Gan

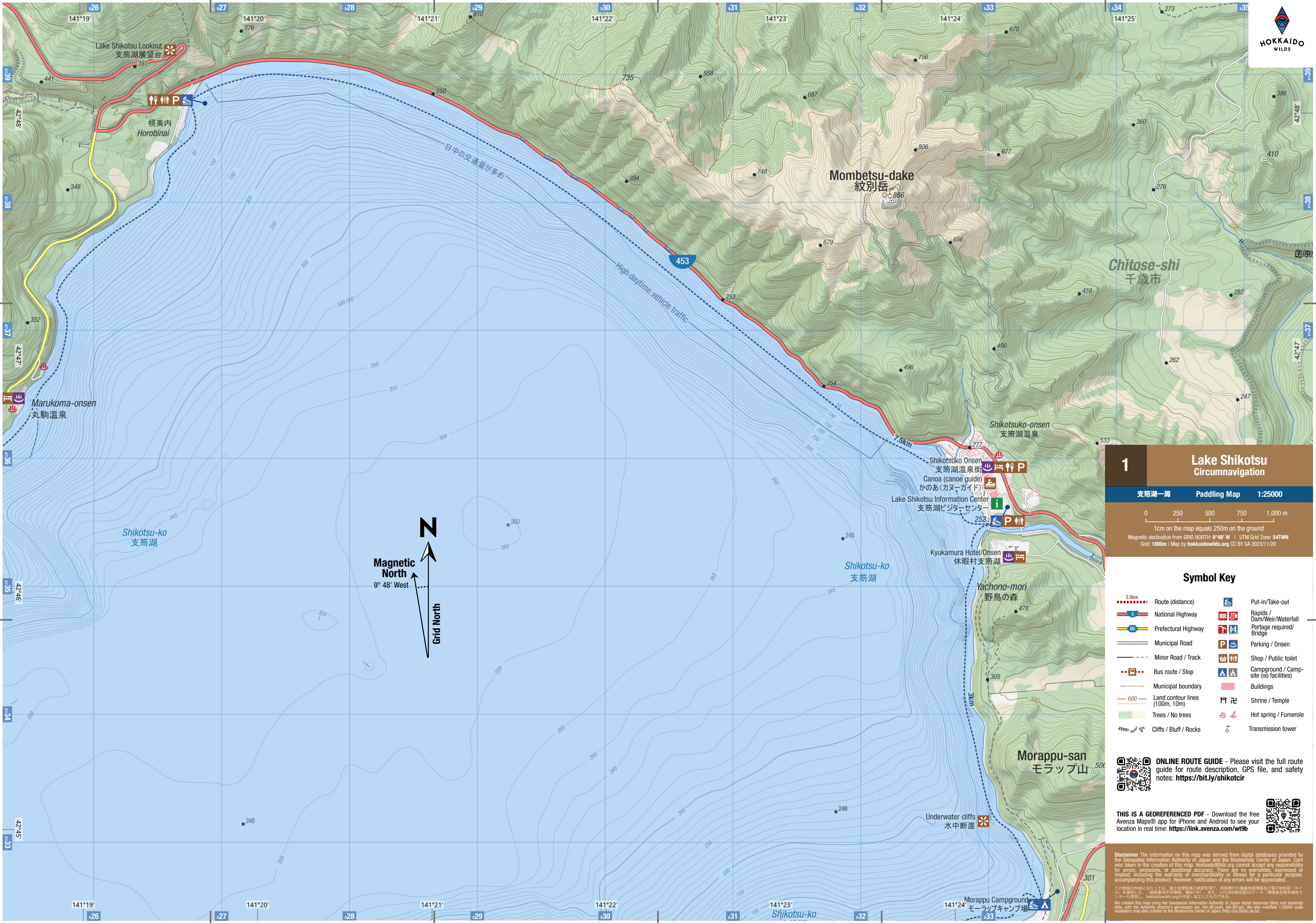
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Lake Shikotsu  
Circumnavigation

支笏湖一周

Paddling Map

1:25000

02505007501,000 m

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground

Magnetic declination from GRID NORTH: 9°48' W | UTM Grid Zone: 54TWN

Grid: 1000m | Map by [hokkaidowilds.org](http://hokkaidowilds.org) CC BY SA 2023/11/20

Symbol Key			
	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://bit.ly/shikotcir>

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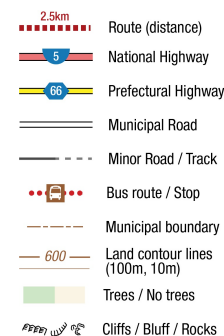
## Lake Shikotsu Circumnavigation

支笏湖一周 Paddling Map 1:25000

1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground

Magnetic declination from GRID NORTH: 9°48' W | UTM Grid Zone: 54TWN  
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### Symbol Key

 Put-in/Take-out Portage require  
Bridge  Shop / Public to

**Buildings**



  Hot spring / Fur



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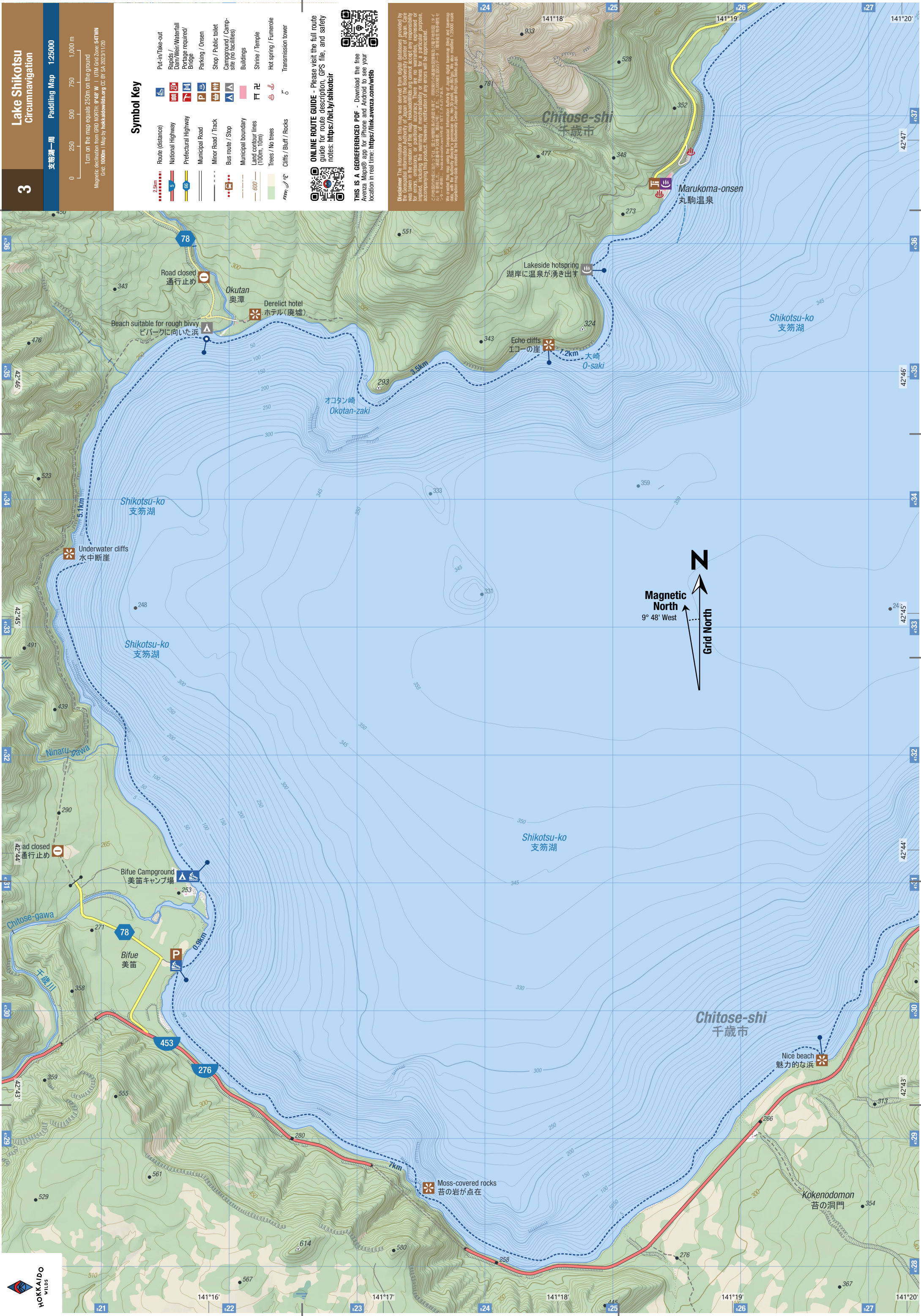
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Lake Shikotsu  
Circumnavigation

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Padding Map 1:25000

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			Transmission tower

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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.

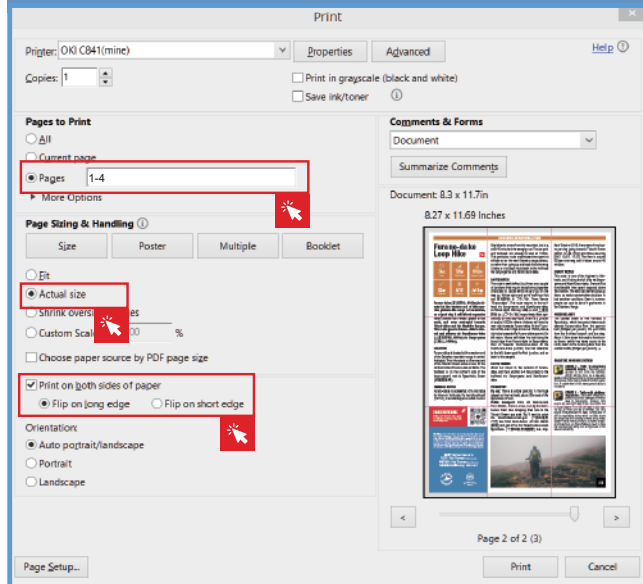
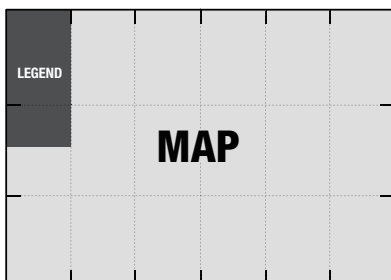


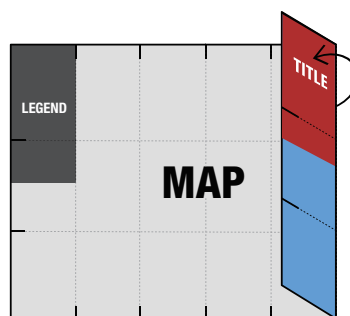
Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size" is selected (Windows).

## ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

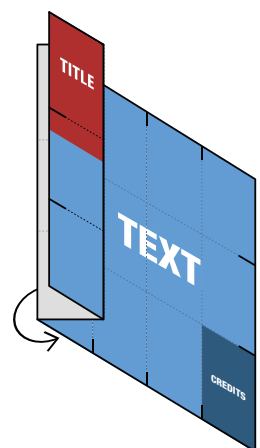
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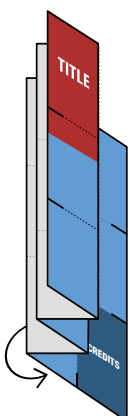
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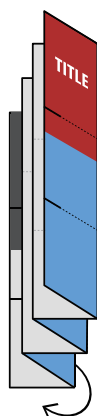
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