

Adventure from Osaka to Hamamatsu City



Miss Mai

July 28: Today is low atmospheric pressure throughout Japan with intermittent and sometimes very heavy rain. My destination is Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, the [city I visited on May 26th](#) this year. I'm travelling from Osaka and the distance is only a fraction of my previous trip from Niigata. Nevertheless the trip wasn't as easy as I had hoped. I had to take refuge from the rain from time to time, and I had to wait over an hour for a ride at two different parking areas on the Meishin Expressway which runs from Osaka to Nagoya.

The first vehicle was a car carrier truck. The driver took me from Suita Service Area in Osaka to Taga Service Area just before the junction that goes off to Fukui on the Sea of Japan. I was very glad to get a ride this far because it took me way past Kyoto. Normally when standing at Taga, I'm looking for rides going toward the Sea of Japan as this is the closest route on the way home to Niigata. However today I need to go in the direction of Nagoya. I figured it would be easy but it wasn't. The first hour a dozen drivers offered me a ride, but they were either going only a short distance or the wrong direction away from Nagoya.

After an hour a car stopped with two ladies who said they were travelling to Nagano! Their destination would take me to the Chuo expressway past Nagoya which heads off away from my destination. Nevertheless because I knew of the Owari-Ichinomiya Service area which just before the junction to the Chuo expressway, I asked them for a ride.

The driver's name is Eri and her passenger was her 17 year old daughter Mai. They both were glad to meet a foreigner to practice their English. Eri spoke better English than her daughter because she travelled extensively in the USA and Canada.



Man who took me from Owari-
Ichinomiya to Moriyama

I had to wait yet another hour just to get a ride to a parking area on the Tomei Expressway which runs past Nagoya and goes to Shizuoka. Now my chances are better with more traffic heading in the direction of Hamamatsu. A man from an advertising company took me to the Moriyama parking area. Now I was sure to make it to my destination in spite of the rain!

After waiting a relatively short time, a young man, an off duty policeman named Mr. Itou took me to the Togo parking area near Toyota city. I enjoy meeting professional people and usually ask them many questions about their work.

From there a 34 year old single man named Mr. Suganuma took me to Toyokawa train station from where I took a short train ride the rest of the way. He works in the automobile manufacturing business which is now in a major slump. Mr. Suganuma asked me to buy a car, but I told him I prefer catching rides with others. □

Adventure to Kyoto



Rinko and Tamako. Parents took me
to Ozumi PA on the Hokuriku
Expressway

July 25: Today is the start of a 3 week hitchhike adventure from Niigata in Northern Honshu to the southern island of Kyushu. I won't go directly to Kyushu from Niigata because others in the Honshu area are asking me to visit

them first. This turned out to be good for my schedule because Kyushu today was drenched with torrential rain! Heavy rainfalls are frequent this time of year in Southern Japan and often cause landslides and a loss of life. At the time of this post, 8 people have died the past couple days.

]I left home at 8:20 AM and made it to Kyoto in 7 cars by 6:30PM. It was indeed a good trip considering the distance of 600 some kilometers. Only once I had to wait nearly an hour for a ride.



Hiroaki Suzuki, newly married only
3 months ago. Took me to Sanjo
Interchange.

Two of the drivers spoke English well enough to converse in it. One driver was a doctor, a surgeon. One was a husband and wife with their two small daughters in the back seat. Only one driver expressed some doubt as to what kind of person I am. He said, "Don't do anything to distract my driving!" I asked him what exactly he meant and he replied, "Like try to strangle me!"

Mr. and Mrs. Iinosan from Wakayama Prefecture who took me from Niigata to Toyama were on the way to Takayama city in Gifu Prefecture. They both spoke fairly good English. He is a farmer who grows all the vegetables his family needs for food! His wife has a job and earns enough money to buy their other needs. Only a few minutes after they dropped me off at the Arisoumi Service Area in Toyama I caught another ride from a man going all the way to Shiga Prefecture! This man was waiting in line at the gas station just in front of Mr. and Mrs. Iinosan's car. When they saw the man offer me a ride, they rejoiced!

The man, Mr. Shinzawa, took me all the way to Shiga which means we passed completely through the next two prefectures of Ishikawa and Fukui. Normally I hitchhike in at least one of these prefectures to make it to the Kyoto / Osaka area. He is now retired and formerly worked as a researcher in semiconductors. Mr. Shinzawa was on his way to a fishing trip to Oki Island which is just off Tottori Prefecture in the Sea of Japan.

[Adventure from Nagano to Niigata on a rainy day](#)



The trip from Shiojiri City in Nagano to Niigata.

July 19: This is actually the continuation of my previous post of my adventure to Kita-karuizawa. Word Press apparently doesn't like long posts!

Today I'm on my way back home from Shiojiri City in Nagano Prefecture. There was a low pressure area all over Japan, but except for a few drizzles of rain in the early morning in Shiojiri, it still looked OK to hitchhike.

The first driver was a single lady in her 30s named Mayumi who took me 20 kilometers to the Azusagawa Service area from where I got on the Nagano Expressway. Mayumi said that she was ill though she looked well. I inquired further and she said she hears voices in her head!! I immediately said that I am a Christian missionary and understand spiritual problems. I told Mayumi that her problem is spiritual, and not curable by drugs or medical treatment. I asked her if I may lay my hands on her head and pray for her after we get to Azusagawa. She agreed. And I told her about Jesus and we held hands while she prayed to receive Him! After that I laid my hands on her head and rebuked the evil spirit telling it to depart.



Mr and Mrs. Ishibashi from Mie Prefecture

The next car was a husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ishibashi from Mie Prefecture who were on their way to Myoko Kogen, an area famous for skiing. I told them there was no more snow, and they said they were going to escape the heat down south. Mr. Ishibashi is the president of a pharmaceutical company. I told them about meeting Mayumi and her spiritual problem. Though he runs a drug company, he agreed that drugs will not cure her!

Mr. and Mrs. Ishibashi took me to the Obuse parking area. From there a young man going to Iiyama picked me up. Iiyama is off the expressway but is on

route 117 which is the shortest road back home. I knew I could get back on an expressway from Echigo Kawaguchi, and I had hoped to escape the rain because the weather was looking bad and I knew it was probably raining hard along coast of the Sea of Japan which is the route I would have taken had I stayed on the expressway.

I asked the young man to take me to a traffic light but instead he took me to a Seven Eleven convenience store where he said I could buy an umbrella. It had started to rain, not too hard, but hard enough to not want to stand waiting in it.

I went to the Seven Eleven but there were no umbrellas for sale. I then waited about 10 minutes under the covering of the store until the rain let up and started to hitchhike. A lady picked me up saying she was going only about 15 minutes up the road. I asked her to take me to a traffic light, but instead she eventually turned left at an intersection with no traffic light. It was raining hard and so I asked her to take me to a train station.

The train station is on the Iiyama line, and the next train was exactly 2 hours later! It was raining too hard to go anywhere. The train station was tiny and unmanned, but it offered shelter from the rain.

Across the street from the station was a typical Japanese shop. After waiting about 20 minutes the rain let up to the point that I could walk to the shop where I hoped would have an umbrella for sale. The shop owner didn't look too pleased to see me and said she didn't sell umbrellas. I saw several umbrellas that previous customers left in the umbrella holder outside the store and asked if I couldn't take one. She said it was fine! Now I had some protection from the rain and walked back to the main highway.

Hitchhiking on a lonely country road in the midst of the mountains of Nagano on a rainy day is not a desirable situation. I was glad at least it wasn't cold. The cars whizzed past me splashing water as they went. The drivers seemed to care less about my plight. But I knew it was only a matter of time. After about half an hour, a family going to Tokamachi picked me up. Tokamachi is still 100 kilometers from home, but I took a train the rest of the way back. It continued to rain hard intermittently.

[Adventure to Kita-Karuizawa](#)



Route from Niigata to Kita-Karuizawa

July 17: The purpose of this trip is to visit new friends, Brian from the UK and his Japanese wife Mieko. They spend their summers in Kita-Karuizawa near Mt. Asama in Gunma Prefecture, which is about 370 kilometers or 230 miles from my home. They first contacted me because of their interest in this blog. I had never met them face to face before. Though Kita-Karuizawa is in Gunma, I saw from the map that the surest way to get to it is to take a round about way through Nagano. I had never been to that area before. This trip took me over the 80,000 kilometer mark since keeping [records from August of 2003](#).



Mt. Asama

Hitchhiking 370 kilometers to Kita-Karuizawa in only 4 rides with very little waiting time was as good as it gets! I left home at 10:30AM and arrived at the very door of my destination a few minutes after 4PM.

The first driver was a Yamazaki Bread man. He went out of his way to take me to the expressway entrance at Sanjo.

The second driver, Mr. Tsukioka, took me to Echigo Kawaguchi which was the epicenter of the Niigata Chuetsu earthquake of October 23, 2004. This was the second time to meet Mr. Tsukioka when hitchhiking! He remembered picking me up last year at Tokamachi City.



Tokyo man who took
me to Kamisato
from Echigo
Kawaguchi



Brian and Mieko

Because Brian gave me the exact latitude and longitude to his house, I felt that Mr. Kubo may have turned down the wrong road and gone past it. He turned around and went back to the last intersection. I saw a man who appeared to be a foreigner walking in front of the house at the corner of the intersection and called out, "Brian!" He turned and said, "James, you made it!"

July 18: The next day at noon, Brian and Mieko took me to the Saku interchange of the Joushin'estu expressway. I called Mr. Kobayashi who lives in Nagano city and has a company in Chikuma city which is 54 kilometers from Saku. Mr. Kobayashi has been a good friend whom I met many times since we first met back in 2001. I was hitchhiking in Nagano and he picked me up. Mr. Kobayashi invited me to lunch and encouraged me to come as quickly as possible to Chikuma. At first he offered to pay for a train, but then realized I could arrive even quicker if I hitchhiked. I told him I would call again after getting picked up.



Young man who took me to Shiojiri
City from Midoriko

After a 10 minutes wait at the interchange, a lady who appeared to be in her 30s, Sachie, offered me a ride as far as the Yunomaru Service area about 14 kilometers toward my destination. Sachie carries blood samples from doctor clinics to hospitals. She says she washes her hands frequently to avoid getting infected. It's possible some of the samples may even contain HIV!

A few minutes into our journey, Sachie offered to take me all the way to Chikuma after a brief stop at a hospital in Yunomaru to drop off her blood samples. Chikuma was still 39 kilometers away and it cost her another 950 yen and 40 minutes of her time to take me there! Mr. Kobayashi waited for us at the Koshoku interchange exit. He was delighted that a lady picked me up and offered to take her out to lunch with me. However Sachie declined the offer saying that she still had more work that day.

Mr. Kobayashi took me back to his office where we met an associate of his, Mr. Sano. Mr. Sano was wearing a fine gold ring. When I inquired about it, he said it is a special ring that helps blood circulation and improves health. One ring costs 1,800,000 yen or about \$19,000 US. I asked Mr. Kobayashi if he bought one and he said no.

Mr. Kobayashi knew that Mr. Sano was heading in the same direction I wanted to go, and he asked him if he would take me. Mr. Sano was glad to and said that he would take me to Akashina train station, about 80% of the way to my destination. Mr. Kobayashi then said I would not want to take the train but rather hitchhike the rest of the way. I expected that he would tell Mr. Sano

how much I love to hitchhike and meet people, but instead he said I hitchhike because I have no money! I told them that's no entirely true! I had plenty of cash with me, a little over 4000 yen or about 10 times what that train fare would be. Of course I do love to save money as well as meet people.