

June 21-23 Hitchhike Adventure to Hirosaki



Young man who took me back home.

June 21st is my birthday but I had to celebrate it on the road traveling. The Sea of Japan was a bit choppy than last week with an overcast sky.

The first car was a mother and her son on the way to Yunohama in Tsuruoka city. Because Yunohama is on the coast and away from the main National Route 7, I debated going with them all the way. However because the map showed me the coastal road that passes through Yunohama was more direct to my destination, I decided to pioneer it. I regreted my decision after a few minutes of arrival. The traffic was sparse. I walked up the road a couple kilometers to get past the village and 40 some minutes later caught a ride from a man going to Sakata City.

Unfortunately the driver's destination in Sakata did not pass close to Route 7. He told me it was a couple kilometers further and showed me a road perpendicular to the one we were on that connects to the closest point of Route 7. Instead I opted to hitchhike further straight ahead. I knew the road would eventually meet up with Route 7.

A lady saw me hitchhiking and turned around to come back for me. It turned out she is a Christian and attends a local church! It's quite rare for me to run into Japanese believers in Jesus Christ. Official statistics put the Christian population of Japan at 1%, but for sure much less than one out of a hundred drivers who pick me up are Christians.



Truck that took me from Higashi Noshiro to Odate City. You can see

my luggage on the side.

At Higashi Noshiro on the road leading to an expressway, a large truck stopped for me. It's not common for truck drivers to offer me a ride these days. Only 6% of the vehicles are trucks, and probably less the type of trucks you see in the photo.

The truck driver took me to the center of Odate City and pointed out the road I needed to continue on to Aomori. My favorite hitchhike spot in this city was around 5 kilometers further, too far to walk. I saw a Lawson convenience store a hundred meters further and walked up to it so I could use the store's free WIFI to connect my Google Android to the Internet and see a map. In the process of doing so, a young man approached me and asked where I want to go. He said he would take me to Odate Station. I went with him not because I intended to get on a train, but because the station was on my way. From there I walked a couple kilometers further to my usual spot in Odate. A few minutes later a man picked me up and took me exactly where I wanted to go in Hirosaki.

The return to Niigata



Mother and her 7 year old daughter,
Chiehiro.

Two days later I headed back home, this time intending to take the Tohoku Expressway which runs through Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures.

The first car was a mother and her 7 year old daughter who were on their way to a children's marathon. They took me to the Hirosaki / Owani Tohoku Expressway interchange.



Mr and Mrs. Miyamoto who took me to
Iwatesan Service Area.

The second car was a young couple on their way to Morioka. They are shop owners dealing in antique furniture. I hope to see them again when I return to Hirosaki next Saturday for their shop is quite near where I have my business.

The next driver was on his way to Sendai, a very good distance toward home, over 150 kilometers further. I asked him to take me to Chojahara Service area. We expected to arrive by noon but due to a big accident on the expressway, the road was closed from Maesawa to Ichinoseki. A large truck had overturned which affected traffic in both directions. It took us some 40 minutes to travel only a few kilometers on Route 4 which runs parallel to the

Tohoku Expressway. Sunday traffic was congested.

Though I arrived at Chojahara later than expected, the next car more than made up for it. I caught a driver from Hachinohe going all the way to Niigata! This is possibly a first for me. Usually from that point it takes 2 or 3 more cars to get me home.

[June 14-15 Hitchhike Adventures to Aomori and back](#)



This trip I broke the 150,000 kilometer mark of distance traveled by hitchhiking since keeping statistics from August of 2005.

After only a few minutes wait at my usual spot near Majima Station at Murakami City, a man driving a large van stopped for me. He lives in Osaka but is originally from Okinawa. Some of my readers may not know that Okinawa used to be part of what is known as "Ryukyu Okoku" or the Kingdom of Ryukyu. The peoples of Okinawa the many islands of Ryukyu are ethnically different from the Japanese. They have their own language and culture but have accepted Japanese rule over them. The driver told me there is no such word as "pitiable" in the Okinawan language because everybody equally in Okinawa has toils and troubles in life!□

We stopped frequently along the way to take photos. The man was in no hurry to get anywhere and drove the longer scenic route along the seacoast. I worried a bit that it might take longer to go with him and considered getting off if he veered too far from the main route. But because of previous experiences waiting up to an hour for the next ride, I figured a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. We basically stayed not too far from Route 7 and though we even stopped to have lunch at a noodle shop, we arrived in Akita city around 1 p.m. Sometimes I don't get to Akita till after 2 p.m. From Murakami to Akita City is a considerable distance of 210 kilometers. That's very good for a single ride on regular roads.



The noodle shop the driver treated me to lunch.



The driver and his treat

On the way we noticed the Sea of Japan was unusually calm! I've never seen it such. On most days it's choppy and windy. It was a windless day.



The Sea of Japan near the border of Niigata and Yamagata



Couple on their way to Sapporo who took me to Aomori City from Odate.

The 4th and last car took me from Odate City in Akita Ken all the way to my destination of Aomori city, a good 80 some kilometers. I was surprised to learn the driver, a software developer, was only 23 years old but his wife is 48! I asked her age after asking his because I couldn't see her face clearly while sitting in the back seat and had no idea she was that old! But she didn't seem to mind. Because she asked permission to take my photo when getting off I was emboldened to ask permission for theirs.

On the way back to Niigata the next day, I arrived at the Tohoku Expressway IC at Hirosaki at 12:30 p.m. which is rather late. But in only 3 rides I got as far as Adatara S.A. which is just before the Koriyama junction of the Tohoku – Banetsu expressways. The Banetsu takes me home to Niigata, about 137 kilometers away.

After a relatively short wait I caught a ride with a family on their way to Aizuwakamatsu. The husband was driving quite fast while I engaged in lively conversation with him. The distance to the junction from Adatara is only 7.3 kilometers (distance learned at the time of this post) and because of the speed we were traveling, after 5 minutes I wondered why we hadn't made the turn on the junction yet. I asked the driver but he replied, "It's 20 kilometers further up the road." I accepted his word but when after 10 more minutes we *still* hadn't made the turn on the junction I knew we had definitely missed it! It was raining hard, visibility was poorer, and the driver had his navigation turned off! He acknowledged that I was correct. We pulled off the Tohoku Expressway at the first exit and got back on at a further point the other direction. The mistake cost me at least 30 minutes of time and I got to the Bandaisan Service Area at 7:00 p.m.

It was almost dark but to get to Bandaisan at any time means a certain ride home. After a few minutes two ladies on their way home to Niigata picked me up. I told them of the mistake the previous driver made, but said that as a believer in the providence of my Creator, I know nothing happens by accident, it was all part of a [Divine Plan](#). If the driver didn't miss the junction I probably never would have met them. The ladies agreed with me.

[Record time hitchhiking back from Aomori](#)



This trip I hitchhiked 951 kilometers from Niigata Prefecture to Aomori Prefecture and back in 16 cars. Again the first person to pick me up in Murakami city near Majima station was Mrs. Fujiwara, a lady who buys and sells fish. It was the third time to meet her! It's highly likely we will meet again.

The return trip from Hiroshima to Niigata was via the Tohoku Expressway though Fukushima in 5 cars. A man took me directly to the train station where I park my bicycle. Fifteen minutes later I was back home at 3 p.m.! This is the best time ever. The previous record was 4 p.m. The distance traveled was 560 kilometers.



Steep hill close to Nezugasaki near the border of Niigata and Yamagata



Mr. Saito who took me to Atsumi Onsen in Yamagata. He looks a bit like the current Japanese Prime minister Abe.



This car was so small I had to hold my luggage on my lap!



Lady who took me from Kisarazu to Honjo City in Akita Prefecture. She's a dance teacher. Her husband passed away 2 years ago from cancer leaving her and two daughters, 1 and 5 years old.



Two men who took me to Higashi Noshiro from Akita City. The older man says he always stops for hitchhikers!



On June 9th on the way back to Niigata, a minivan of two men and 5 ladies took me from Hirosaki in Aomori Ken to Iwate. The fifth lady took the photo. Mt. Iwate is in the background.



A high school gymnastics teacher and his friend. They took me all the way from Iwate Prefecture to Kunimi Service are in Fukushima Prefecture.

Went mobile with Google Android Nexus

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On Sunday, June 9, I bought a really great mobile device called "Nexus 7" at a very reasonable price, a little less than \$200. Nexus 7 is a Google Android tablet PC. I thought to get a Smartphone but because Smartphones require a monthly charge for Internet usage, and because Nexus 7 can connect to the Internet with WIFI, I decided to go with the Google Android Nexus 7 instead. It means no monthly charges! Nexus 7 is not a phone but it runs Skype, email, Internet, and has millions of applications. So far I installed a train schedule program, VLC video player, a weather forecast program, Japanese input software, and KJV Bible software. Nexus 7 is beyond my expectations! I bought for it an adapter cable so I could attach it to an external USB keyboard, and a WIFI router to carry with me while traveling. When visiting friends I can connect the WIFI router to their Internet modem to get online. And in Japan there are some free WIFI spots. I found two so far.

Yes, as with all electronic communication gadgets there is a risk on privacy. Before I turned the location finder off, Big Brother Google pinpointed exactly where I was!. But hey, what I do and what I have to say I don't mind if anybody and his brother know about it. In fact, I want them to. I wouldn't have made this website if I didn't. I'd rather have the freedom to use tools of communication to get proclaim truth even though it may risk my personal security.

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. – Luke 12:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou (the Lord Jesus Christ) art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. – Psalms 23:4

A web article that says exactly what I feel about security and privacy:

[Response to Obama's "Can't Have 100% Security, 100% Privacy" Statement](#)