

Adventure from Niigata to Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka



The red line running from the north to the southeast shows my proposed journey. Click the image to see an enlargement.

I hitchhiked to Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka Prefecture to bring a laptop PC to my friend Maria and teach her how to use it. It's a Windows Vista PC which she is unfamiliar with. To hitchhike such a long distance (about 560 kilometers) passing through Tokyo is a real challenge for me. I calculate what time I should be at certain points to see if I can realistically reach my destination the same day. The hardest part of this trip is figuring out how to get on the Tomei Expressway which runs from Tokyo to Nagoya and passes by Hamamatsu.

At 9:00AM I got off to a bad start. The first driver took me only a few kilometers and to an area off the main highway. Lesson learned: Make sure of the drivers destination before boarding!

To get back toward the main highway I had to walk a couple kilometers. A kind man from [Gosen city](#) stopped and took me to route 8, a major road that passes close to Sakae Parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. I now had a much better chance to get a good ride out. The driver told me that Gosen city has some of the best natural water in Japan. "Gosen" literally means "five springs."

The third driver was going to Sanjo city and went out of his way for me to take me to Sakae Parking Area. This helped gain some of the time I lost with the first ride.

The fourth driver was going all the way to Narita Airport to meet his Thai wife returning from her home country. He took me as far as Takasaka Service area in Saitama area just before Tokyo. From there two men going to Yokohama took me to the entrance of the Tomei expressway at Yoga Interchange.

I thought there was a parking area at Yoga and walked in vain 30 minutes to find it. I remembered that I hitchhiked from Yoga a few years ago standing close to the entrance ramp, and I hoped I wouldn't have to do it again. At Yoga I have to stand on the narrow divider area between two lanes in the middle of the road to make my intention known to the drivers. I knew the police would scold me and kick me out if they saw me standing there. So I prayed desperately for a ride. I knew it would have to be a car without any traffic in back of it in order for the driver to stop safely.



Yuko and Thomas

After about 15 minutes a lady stopped for me, a real miracle! Her name is Yuko and she delivers curry dishes with her American husband. I asked Yuko if her husband wouldn't be angry for her to pick up a strange man hitchhiking, and she said, "No problem, he already knows!" Thomas was following from behind in another vehicle.

Yuko took me to the Kohoku Parking area and there I met her husband, Thomas. I was surprised to learn Thomas is ethnic Vietnamese. I told them about a website I made that has Vietnamese literature, starsandpearls.com. Thomas said that he can't read Vietnamese but will read the English that is next to it. Both Yuko and Thomas seemed impressed with how I live and travel. I told them that it's only because of God's care that I can live in such a way. Thomas was raised a Roman Catholic. He said that it was amazing to meet me at this time because that very day at a coffee shop he had got into a deep discussion with a friend about the [meaning of life](#). Yuko speaks good English but said she usually speaks in Japanese with Thomas at home.



Young man who works with an insurance company who took me from Kohoku to Ebina Service area on the Tomei Expressway.



Ashigara Service area at sunset with Mt Fuji in the background.

From Ebina a 31 year old man on the way to Numazu City took me to Ashigara Service area in Shizuoka Prefecture. I had a good view of Mt. Fuji which kept me inspired while waiting a relatively long time of about an hour to catch the next ride. An older couple returning home to Tsuruga in Fukui took me the rest of the way to Hamamatsu. Tsuruga is relatively close to Obama, the town

made famous due to Barack Obama's election to U.S. President. In all it took 9 cars and 11 hours to travel 560 kilometers from my home to Hamamatsu City.

The return home

May 28: It's extremely windy at 10:00 AM when I set out. After only a short wait, Mr. Matsui, a veterinarian, took me to the Nihonzaka Parking area on the Tomei expressway. I've been picked up by doctors before, but this is the first time to meet a veterinarian when hitchhiking. I told him that in 1981 when living in Noda city in Chiba prefecture, a veterinarian gave my cat a free operation to sew up his torn abdomen. It was caused by fighting with the local tom cats!



Mt. Fuji taken in Feb. 2004 from a highway as I travelled. The clearest views of the volcano are in the winter.

At Nihonzaka, I had to wait an hour for the next ride. The wind was so strong it nearly knocked me off balance once and blew my hat off twice! Policemen entered the parking area a few times in their squad cars, but they didn't seem interested in me. Mr. Someya came and rescued me taking me to a larger service area, Fujikawa which is not far from Mt. Fuji, where I had a better chance of getting a longer ride. It wasn't nearly as windy at Fujikawa, but it started to rain a bit.

After only a few minutes, a middle aged man took me all the way to Shinkiba station in Tokyo. From there I took a train to Fujino station in Saitama which is close to the Miyoshi Service area. I knew there is a bus I could catch but rather than wait for it, I started to walk in what I thought was the right direction. After a few minutes, I realized I was lost and walked up to a car waiting at a traffic light to ask for directions. Two ladies were sitting in the car, and older lady named Michie and the younger one who is Michie's daughter, Akiko, the driver. Akiko told me I was walking the opposite direction from Miyoshi offered me a ride! It's not very common to be offered a ride in this manner. Akiko and Michie were glad to go out of their way for me.

From Miyoshi Service area of the Kan'etsu expressway, another lady took me to Takakaka Service area, and from there two men took me to the border of Gunma to Kamisato Service area. It's now already dark a little after 7PM.

Once a few years ago after dark I waited three long hours for a ride at Kamisato! I certainly hoped not to repeat that experience. It was getting colder and I was dressed in a short sleeve shirt with only a thin wind breaker jacket over it. After only 15 minutes a man stopped and offered me a ride to Echigo Yuzawa in Niigata! From there I could catch a train the rest of the way back home, but I was short a few hundred yen for the fare for that distance of about 100 kilometers. I told the man, Akio, that rather than take

me all the way to Echigo Yuzawa, he could drop me off at the Akagi Kogen service area in Gunma from where I could catch a ride going further. But Akio was insistent that he take me to Echigo Yuzawa! From my cell phone I looked up the next train leaving to be 8:30 PM, and we knew we would arrive in plenty of time for me to catch that train. But because I didn't have enough money for the fare, I kept trying to convince Akio to drop me off at the parking area in Gunma. Akio then said he would give me 1000 yen and asked me if that would be enough. "Quite enough!" I replied. Aren't the Japanese kind to strangers? This isn't the first time I've received gifts of money when hitchhiking. I never ever ask them for money, they offer.

Perhaps Akio was kind to me because I really tried to help and encourage him. Akio said that he has been afflicted with depression from two years ago and was just returning home after seeing a doctor. The doctor told him that drugs will not cure him, only relieve the symptoms. He then said that he went to a woman mystic who told him that he is afflicted with the spirit of a departed person who committed suicide at his workplace! She said that two other people committed suicide at the same workplace. Akio immediately remembered that there were two people who took their lives where he works, and learned later that there was indeed a third person. When I heard that, I immediately started to pray out loud in the Name of Jesus and I told the spirit to leave Akio and go elsewhere! Depression and mental problems are often caused by [spiritual forces](#). I was very glad that Akio knows that too. Half of the way toward victory is identifying true cause of the problem.