

Hitchhike adventure from Oita City to Mount Rokkō, Kobe



August 8: It was fine weather, a Saturday and close to the beginning of the Obon Festival when family travel long distances to their home towns. My destination is [Mount Rokkō](#) in Kobe, a distance of over 600 kilometers. I never hitchhiked to the Kansai area in a single day from Oita, but because of the 3 positive factors in my favor, I decided to go for the gold and try it. It turned out to be as good as it gets in the life of a professional hitchhiker! It only took 4 cars with the third driver taking me to Hiroshima to meet a friend and change cars. They took me 95% of the way of the distance of this day's journey to my exact destination – the **very same** destination they themselves were going to!

The first driver was a mother with her 15 year old son, Izumi and Asuka who took me to Beppuwan Service area. They were going to Oita Airport to pick up a relative. Izumi was very pleasant and spoke some English. She encouraged her son to speak to me in English as well.

The second driver was a third generation ethnic South Korean man who took me to Nakatsu City on route 10. I asked him all sorts of questions about Japanese prejudice toward his ethnicity. Though both his parents were born in Japanese, they faced segregation when they grew up. The third generation was treated better, and the man said he even married an ethnic Japanese woman!

The man told me that in 1958 North Korea was portrayed in Japan as heaven on earth. Many ethnic North Koreans who resided in Japan decided to move to North Korea in the hopes of having a better life. Two thirds of them died within only the first 3 years, many from starvation!



Okawa Shigeo, a retired highschool principal.

After waiting only a few minutes at an intersection in Nakatsu on route 10, a

retired high school principle, Mr. Okawa picked me up. At first I told him I was going to Kitakyushu, but when he told me he was going to Kobe, I rejoiced and asked if I could ride with him to Kobe. As it turned out, his ultimate destination was Mount Rokkō!

Mr. Okawa was on his way to the reunion of his college graduating class in Kobe. He said he would get off the expressway at Miyajima in Hiroshima Prefecture, meet a friend, Mr. Mizushima, and then Mr. Mizushima would take us the rest of the way in his car.

Later Mr. Okawa learned that the reunion wasn't to be held till the next day, on Sunday. He repeated over and over that it must have been God's planning to cause him to make a mistake of the date, for had he not, he never would have met me or taken me to Mount Rokkō!

After getting off the expressway in Hiroshima, because we had an hour and a half wait before Mr. Mizushima would be ready to travel, Mr. Okawa took me on a guided tour of the island of Miyajima, a 10 minute ferry ride from the mainland. Miyajima is famous for its large Shinto shrine and domesticated deer walking the streets among the public. The deer, unlike the deer at Nara park in Nara, do not beg food from the public and will let a person touch and pet them.