

Hitchhiking during Golden Week, 2009



With another man also hitchhiking! His partner with him took the photo



Hirosaki Castle the beginning of
May

I had a fantastic 10 day trip traveling 1460 kilometers in 28 vehicles during the Japanese holiday season from April 29 to May 5th known as "[Golden Week](#)".

April 30th: It took me over two hours and 6 vehicles just to get out of Niigata City! A lady took me as far as Toyosaka on the edge of Niigata City. She said her 29 year old daughter lived one year in Montana. After that a Russian man took me as far as East Port in Niigata and after that a lady with her mother took a me a few kilometers further up route 113 to the middle of nowhere somewhere between Niigata city and Murakami city. It was a less than desirable spot to catch a ride with few cars passing through a forested area, but I had a scenic view of the Sea of Japan on my left that kept me inspired. After a long wait a young man who works in a travel agency who says he is a Christian and whose father is from Nagasaki took me to route 7 in Murakami. In all it took 16 cars in all to get to Akita City 270 kilometers down route 7 arriving at 7:30PM, but the last driver took me to the very area where I spent the night with friends.



Chieharu and Jun

May 1st: It took two hours just to get out of Akita city. After waiting at least 30 minutes on route 13, a lady who works in a kindergarten took me about 10 kilometers to a point close to route 7. From there an elderly man took me a short ways to a gasoline station on route 7 but from there I had to walk a long distance of nearly an hour to get to a good traffic light. The third person was a truck driver who took me all the way to Odate in Akita

Prefecture. The 4th car was a young couple, Jun and Chieharu who took me all the way to the very door of my destination in Aomori City! They actually went a hundred kilometers out of their way to take me because their destination was Hirosaki city, about 50 kilometers before Aomori City. They were on their way to Hirosaki Castle Park to see the cherry blossoms. I had a lot of time to share my faith in Jesus with Jun and Chieharu. They happily prayed with me to [receive Christ as their Savior](#).



Koinobori

May 5th: This is the last day of the Golden Week holiday which is called "*Kodomo no hi*" which means "Children's Day". Everywhere there are waving flags in the shape of Carp that are called "[Koinobori](#)" meaning "Carp banner". I left Aomori to go to Chiba in the Tokyo area, nearly 700 kilometers due south. Previous experiences in trying to catch a ride from a driver entering the Tohoku the expressway from Aomori have been difficult with long waits of over an hour, but today I caught the first ride within a minute! The driver was a policeman who flashed his badge at me after riding with him for a few minutes. I was glad to meet a friendly officer of the law, for I told him on April 15 I had been [stopped by two policemen for hitchhiking](#) and was detained for 10 minutes in their patrol car. He smiled sympathetically. I asked him if hitchhiking is illegal in Japan or not, and he replied that it is not. The officer took me up to Hanawa Service Area in Akita Prefecture. The area was crowded with parked cars and people.

After waiting only a few minutes at Hanawa, a couple, Mr. and Mrs Nagata with Kawasaki license plates stopped to pick me up. I rejoiced because I knew they would take me over 95% of the rest of the way to my destination of Noda City in Chiba! This must be the longest I've ever went in a single vehicle for it was at least 600 kilometers.



Takaaki, Atsumi, Minori
and Ryota

Mr. and Mrs. Nagata have been married for 16 years but have no children. Mrs. Nagata told me that they would like to adopt a child, but Japanese law makes it difficult to adopt unless you already have at least one child! She would need to be a registered kindergarten teacher to qualify.

The travel time from Niigata City to Aomori city of 480 kilometers was 17 hours averaging 29 kilometers per hour in 20 vehicles. By comparison, the trip from Aomori to the Tokyo area only took 3 cars and 8 hours to go 670 some kilometers, and this was in spite of traffic pileups on the expressway during the last day of Golden Week. It was 3 times faster to travel on the expressway than the regular road.

May 9th: The sweetest people who picked me up on the way back home were four young people on the way to Numazu in Gunma Prefecture, Ryota, Minori, Takaaki and Atsumi. Their average age was 25 years old. One of the girls, Minori, often touched my arm showing affection. They all visited the USA for a month a few years ago and spoke some English. One of the young men, Ryota, gave me his pen that he said he used in his university.

From Akagi Kougen Service area, Mr. Katou took me as far as Koide, a small town between Kawaguchi and Muika Machi. He travelled all the way from Shizuoka to visit his mother for mother's day which was the next day.



Truck driver who took me to Koide
in Niigata.

From Koide I opted to take the low road to Ojiya knowing that few cars would be entering the expressway from that point. A Suntory Juice truck picked me up. The driver said that he had never picked up a hitchhiker before. I told him, "congratulations!"

A sweet middle aged couple took me the rest of the way back to Niigata. They were on their way to Nakajo to see their son.