

June 21-23 Hitchhike Adventure to Hirosaki



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



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.