

Ten day hitchhike adventure circling central Japan



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



The red line is the route I traveled by hitchhiking.

October 24 to Nov. 3, 2010: I hitchhiked 1390 kilometers in 18 vehicles to cities in the Kanto plain (Tokyo and vicinity), Osaka, and then returned home by a different route along the Sea of Japan. As you can see from the map, I didn't hitchhike the entire distance. On two occasions friends happened to be going toward my destination and gave me a lift, and several times I had to take trains for expediency sake.



Tokyo Bay
Aqua-Line

I traveled along the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line for the very first time, a bridge and tunnel that crosses Tokyo bay. By car this is the fastest way to get from southern Chiba to Kawasaki bypassing the traffic congested Tokyo area and saving 65 kilometers in distance. I had wondered how it could be possible to build a bridge that spans the bay at one point and goes into the bay midway, but as you can see from the photo on the right, the bridge reaches a man made island at the point the tunnel begins.

Because I had to take three trains from Kawasaki after getting off the Aqua line to get back to the expressway at Kokuho parking area on the Tomei, I wondered if I really *did* save time. It was a case of a "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" because the driver just happened to be going that direction and getting rides through Tokyo was far less certain. I wanted to

be in Osaka that evening to avoid the rains of a coming Typhoon, and so spending 770 yen train fare to help speed my journey seemed worth the money.

I met a hitchhiker while heading toward Osaka at the Kohoku parking area on the Tomei expressway, a lady from France who was going to Shimoda, the southern city of the Izu peninsular in Shizuoka Prefecture. It's very rare to see other hitchhikers in Japan, and this is the first time ever to find a female hitchhiking, an older lady at that! She said she's older than me so that would be in her mid 60s. I felt sorry for her because her Japanese is not very good though she says she's lived in Japan already for 10 years, and because her destination was rather hard to get to, mostly by low road. I told her it would be better if we hitchhike together. I found the Japanese are more apt to pick up male/female couples. The first car, a married couple, took us to Ebina service area past Atsugi, and the second driver took her as far as Ashigara near Mt. Fuji.