

Adventure hitchhiking home from Misawa city, Aomori Prefecture



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

Nov. 14, 2010: Today I hitchhiked back home from Misawa city in Aomori, a distance of 570 kilometers, in only 8.5 hours and 3 cars! This was probably one of the quickest and easiest days ever hitchhiking such a distance.

Misawa is home to a large US Air Force base. Many of the people of the city can speak English. I'm sure they benefit economically from the base.

The first driver was a young father, Mr. Nagano, with his two sons, 5 and 6 years old in the back seat. He works as an air traffic controller at Misawa Air base and his wife works part time at a MacDonalDs. Mr. Nagano was on his way to Hachinohe, but because he had extra time, and because he seemed to enjoy speaking to me in English, he took me way out of his way down the Hachinohe expressway to Orizumi Service area. From there it was much easier to get a ride rather than from the expressway entrance at Hachinohe.

The next car were 3 older ladies on their way to Mizusawa in Iwate Prefecture. They took me to Shiwa Service Area past Morioka. I was now in an excellent position to get to Adatarara Service Area in Fukushima, the service area just before the Ban'etsu expressway junction. I needed to travel along the Ban'etsu if I hoped to get home that day.

The last driver, Mr. Motoki, was on his way to Maebashi city in Gunma. It was pretty much a straight shot for Mr. Motoki to go down the Tohoku expressway, get off at Sano in Tochigi prefecture, and take the national highway route 50 toward Maebashi from where he would pick up yet another expressway, but he instead opted to take me to Niigata via the Ban'etsu expressway. It was a bit longer for him to go toward Niigata, but it is also a straight shot from Niigata to his destination of Maebashi.

It was dark by the time we reached Adatarara SA, and Mr. Motoki didn't want me to hitchhike in the dark, so he offered to take me home. It was probably better overall for Mr. Motoki to return the way he did, for he avoided at least one traffic jam and saved an extra 1000 yen in toll by staying on the

expressway. On the weekends in Japan, if you have a “ETC card”, you can travel any distance in Japan on the expressway for only a 1000 yen! This is only a fraction of the toll on a weekday.