

Adventure from Kobe to Kanto



Mr. Notsu from
Matsui

February 7, 2009: I needed to be in Tokyo the very next day and so I hitchhiked to Noda City in Chiba and stayed with friends. It's a long trip of over 600 kilometers but it only took me 3 cars. The longest ride was from Mr. Notsu who teaches mentally handicapped children. He's from Matsui in Shimane Prefecture but lives in Hiratsuka in Kanagawa Prefecture, over 1000 kilometers from where he was raised.



Mr. Fuji from Ashigara Service Area
on the Tomei Expressway

Just a few minutes after they left, a good English speaker, Carl, picked me up took me as far as the Kamisato expressway near Gunma. Carl works as general manager of automotive lighting sales for General Electric.

From Kamisato I got a ride to Shibukawa Parking area which is just past Maebashi city. An older couple, Mr and Mrs. Tomaru, took me. The Mrs. Tomaru was looking at me constantly and always smiling as we talked.

After waiting a relatively short time in Shibukawa Parking area, a man driving a fine car took me as far as Akagi Kogen. He is a owner of a golf club. I asked him how much he pays in taxes every year. He replied their are three separate taxes of 20 million yen each from an average yearly income of 200 million yen.



Mr. and Mrs.
Tomaru

From Akagi Kogen a man took me as far as Echigo Yuzawa. I knew from experience most of the cars from that point would be going back toward Tokyo, and so I decided to hitch-hike on the low road to Muika Machi, about an hour further, and get back on the expressway from there. From before I wanted to visit Muika Machi to check out a job offer. A young man who said he is a road building took me to the company where I left my contact information. After that I walked the rest of the way to the Muika Machi Interchange, a good half hour hike!

From the Muika Machi Interchange a 29 year old man who works in a tool company took me as far as Sanjo. From there it was only a short train ride back home.

The total approximate distance hitch-hiked in this trip was 1917 kilometers or about 1200 miles. The total cost for the short bus and train rides was \$65, and I spent about \$40 for food during the 12 days. I brought back home \$470 made from gifts for my computer work. If didn't hitch-hike but took regular transportation, I surely would have run out of money along the way. Transportation alone would have cost an approximate \$780!

[Adventure to Osaka and Nagoya](#)



Nanami (9) and mother, Mrs. Kondo

January 29, 2009 Today I went to the city of Kashiwazaki to see my friends Nobuo and Miwako. Kashiwazaki is home to the largest nuclear powerplant in the world – built right smack dab on an earthquake fault! The area was hit by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on July 16, 2007. The nuclear reactors immediately

shut down and continue to remain down at the time of this post. It may be several more months before the inspectors are sure the reactors are safe enough to turn back on.

I left home around 9:15AM and walked 20 minutes to the main highway. While waiting at the usual traffic light, a Mrs. Kondo pulled up and asked my destination. Next to her sat her 9 year old daughter Nanami. She offered to take me all the way to the expressway IC in Sanjo – about 20 kilometers out of her way – if I wouldn't mind a slight detour so she could drop her daughter off at school first. I accepted. Mrs. Kondo told me that they returned to pick me up after passing me. Nanami told her, "Mama, there's a man who seems to be in trouble, we have to help him!"

After Mrs. Kondo dropped me off at Sanjo, I took two highway buses to get to the Hokuriku Expressway because I needed to gain some time to make my 2PM appointment with Nobuo. Two drivers took me the rest of the way. One of them was a life insurance salesman. I asked him how any life insurance company can make any money at all when people die and they have to pay out such hefty sums. He replied they invest money in stocks, etc.



Mr. Ohashi, Nobuo and Yuka

In Kashiwazaki I helped Nobuo teach English to his students from 2PM to 8:30PM. It was nice to see Mr. Ohashi again who I met at least 3 times previously, and I got to meet Yuka for the first time. That evening I stayed at Nobuo's parents house.

The next morning after eating a great breakfast, Nobuo's mother took me to the Kashiwazaki expressway entrance. I still didn't know where I would wind up this evening but my general direction was south. The next day I had an appointment to visit friends in Ogaki City in Gifu Prefecture and I had 3 options where to go before that.

Only a few minutes after the first driver picked me up, Nobuo called my cell phone telling me I left my reading glasses! I just had to go back and pick them up. Nobuo's mother kindly went back to the expressway entrance and I got a quick ride back and met her.



Chieko, husband Jun and
baby Shishi

January 31, 2009: Today my destination is Ogaki City in Gifu to see Philip and Maria. I took a bus to the Suita Service area on the Meishi Expressway. The first car was a young couple with a one year old boy. They took me as far as Kyoto. The second driver, a software engineer, took me all the way to Ogaki city – a good 150 kilometers from Kyoto. But he could take me only as

far as the expressway bus stop exit. I still had 10 more kilometers to go, a bit too far to walk and the city is not familiar. But I learned I learned I don't really need to learn the roads because the local people know them well. After a quick lunch, I just went to the road and started hitch-hiking again. A young man picked me up and took me right to my destination. □ He says he makes good money maintaining Bullet train tracks.

Feb. 1, 2009: I went to Nagoya and met my good friend Silvio from Brazil and his Japanese friend Junko. We had a good chat about their projects.

February 2-3, 2009: I visited my Brazilian friend Paulo and his school, 'Escola Sao Paulo' in Anjo City, Aichi Prefecture. He had lots of work for me making sure all the school computers were free of web-bugs, trojans and viruses. I looked at 7 PCs in all, all Notebook computers, and installed Avast Anti-virus on most of them.

Being in the Brazilian school is almost like being in Brazil itself. I had fun picking up Portuguese words and talking to the dear Brazilian people. Most of them cannot speak English, but they all do know some Japanese. Many of them are very good Japanese speakers.



Mrs. Iida

February 4, 2009: Because my business in the Osaka area was not finished, I hitch-hiked from Kamigo Service area near Anjo City back to Osaka in 4 cars. The third car was Mr. and Mrs. Iida and their dog, Rimi. I love dogs and Rimi let me pet her, but she still didn't seem to trust me completely throughout the trip. The Iida family took me as far as Yoro Service Area on the Meishin Expressway. From there a man who works as postal carrier took me the rest of the way to Osaka. He happened to be going to the very area I needed to go, and took me right to my friend's house!

February 5, 2009: I went to Kyoto to help my friend Joseph teach English at his school. Spent all day with him from 10AM till 8:30PM.

[Gathering in Shirone](#)



The fruit of my hitch-hiking adventure on January 15th was being invited to a new year's party in Shirone, a town now incorporated into Niigata city, by the former deputy mayor of the town, Mr. Tsubokawa. I met his friends, mostly ladies, and one gentleman by the name of Mr. Makiguchi. Two of the ladies are Christians who attend the local Lutheran church. All were former English students who like foreigners and especially Americans. Mr. Tsubokawa invited me visit Poland with him and his friends after he learned that my grandparents are Polish! I told him I have no money whatsoever to travel. He said he and his friends would foot all expenses in return for being their interpreter! Let's see if it happens. ☐



Mr. Makiguchi

I also met Mr. Makiguchi who is the director of an agricultural firm that turns vegetables into bio-ethanol. He seemed quite interested in what I had to say about politics in the USA.

Meeting Yoko and Mariko



Yoko

January 20, 2009: **Yoko** and **Mariko**, two ladies in who appeared to be in their 20s, picked me up near downtown Niigata. Yoko lives in Toyosaka and so it was out of the way for her to take me to Akiha Ward, but she did so anyway. Yoko first took Mariko to where she parked her car, dropped her off and then took me home. They work at the Okura 5 star hotel next to Bandai Bridge in Niigata City. Business is much worse this year than it was last year they said. "But" I replied, "the year has just begun!"

[Making new friends through hitchhiking](#)



Making a new friend through hitchhiking.

[Hitchhike to Tokyo, New Years Eve 2008](#)



Hiromi

I hitch-hiked to Tokyo in 5 cars from Niigata. The third driver was Hiromi, 24 years old from Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture. She took me from Sakae Parking area just after Sanjo in Niigata, to Akagi Kougen in Gunma, a distance of

about 150 kilometres. I told Hiromi the Good News of eternal salvation in Jesus and she prayed with me to receive Christ!

The next driver was a 25 year Takayuki from Oita city who took me all the way to Tokyo. I told him about Jesus as well and he also believed! I wanted to introduce Takayuki to Hiromi because they both work in the same city, but this is contingent on whether Hiromi contacts me first. She said she would write me after seeing her photos on my web page, but if she did I may have missed it. I get a lot of spam and a new Japanese address may have been filtered to the spam box by mistake. Maybe she'll still write me later.



Valentin and Yoshiko

In Tokyo I visited my friends Russian Valentin and Japanese Yoshiko. I first met Valentin in 1994 in Khabarovsk, Russia, and a second time in Aomori Japan in 2006. Valentin and Yoshiko work in the national Japanese travel agency.

[Interesting facts about the Japanese Language](#)



The character above is the Chinese/Japanese ideograph meaning love.

I've lived in Japan about half my life or about 27 years at the time of this post. I have been called a good speaker of what is considered one of the most difficult languages to learn in the world.

Is there *anything* easy about Japanese?

Yes!

- No verb conjugation!
- No gender of nouns!
- No articles (a, the)
- Number (singular and plural) not important and barely exists!
- Not hard to learn to pronounce as there are only 48 sounds consisting of 5 vowels and 11 consonants!
- Syntax or the word order of a sentence, excepting the final verb, is totally free!

Why then is Japanese considered difficult to learn?

- The written language has 3 methods of writing: Thousands of Chinese characters called *Kanji* and 2 Japanese syllabaries of 48 characters each called *Hiragana* and *Katakana*. Japanese is therefore considered the most complex written language in the world. In order to get barely by, you need to learn all of the Hiragana and Katakana and at least a few hundred Kanji. Kanji is used for words, hiragana for verb endings and particles after nouns to denote the case of the noun, and katakana is used for foreign loan words and names.
- Most words have two roots of pronunciation, a Chinese root and a Japanese root. They are totally different sounds. So learning Japanese is almost like learning the vocabulary of 2 languages at once!



All of the 8 Kanji characters above are pronounced “*shin*” and all 8 of them are totally unrelated to each other in meaning! They are from left to right: God, advance, believe, new, true, stretch, heart, and parent. There are no tones in Japanese as there are in Chinese, and so the pronunciation of *shin* is exactly the same for all the above. Besides these, there are **many more** Kanji that are also pronounced “*shin*”! The Japanese way to pronounce the characters above are, “*kami*”, *susumu*, “*shinjiru*”, “*atarashii*”, “*makoto*”, “*nobasu*”, “*kokoro*”, and “*oya*”. Notice that the Japanese way of pronouncing a word is multi-syllabic, whereas the Chinese way is a single syllable.

- The main verb comes at the end of the sentence. This can result in the meaning of a long sentence being hard to grasp. Imagine a sentence in English like “A storm system plowed through the central Appalachians into the Eastern Seaboard with heavy rain Wednesday, causing flooding that blocked roads and drove some people from their homes” and put the words “plowed through” at the very end of the sentence.
- Particles follow nouns to denote their usage. This is often hard for foreigners to learn unless you happen to be Korean or Mongolian.
- Ideas are expressed in way that is unrelated to European languages.
- Because there is no verb conjugation according to person, the subject of a sentence can be unclear at times. And because the subject is often *assumed* to be already understood, it is frequently dropped entirely adding to the confusion and ambiguity. This is why Japanese is considered by some a “fuzzy” language. One Japanese linguist, however,

says that it is not really the language that is fuzzy but the way it is used as a result of the culture.

- There are several levels of polite language to learn. These words are called “honorifics”. If you don’t learn them, you will never rise above the rank of “dumb foreigner”.

Is learning Japanese easier for some nationalities than others?

As far as I know, it is easier only for Koreans and Mongolians as their grammar is related to Japanese. It is **not** especially easy for Chinese people to learn. Though the Chinese can already read and understand the meaning of most Kanji characters, they have to learn to pronounce them the Japanese way and learn an entirely new way of expressing themselves using a totally different grammatical sentence structure.

Is it important to learn to read Japanese?

Yes, if you really want to learn the language well. There are many homonyms in Japanese or words that sound the same but have totally different meanings. (As brought out in the 8 meanings of the word “shin”.) Unless you learn to read at least several hundred Kanji (Chinese characters used in Japanese), you cannot understand meanings of words nearly as well as a person who can read Kanji. There is only one sure way you will learn to read Kanji – take a course in a school for at least a year like I did. I just didn’t have the discipline to learn on my own. I don’t know of *any* foreigner who learned Kanji well without a formal school course.

Is it possible to write Japanese in the Roman alphabet?

Yes, possible but not practical. Japanese written in Roman characters is called *romaji*. Romaji is used primarily for foreigners to study Japanese. If General MacArthur had pushed his will to change the written language to the Roman alphabet, Japan would never have advanced to the technological nation it is today. The immense amount of homonyms in the language would have made technological papers and documents hard to understand. Whereas by using Kanji there is always a specific character available out of the thousands at hand.

Are there different dialects of Japanese?

Yes! Tokyo and Sapporo are considered the main 2 centers of the standard national language but all other areas have their own accents and even different words. The Osaka accent is one of the most recognizable. Once at an airport in Paris France I heard 2 Japanese girls speaking and I could tell they were from Osaka. You should have seen the look of surprise on their faces to hear me, a stranger, tell them so! The Tsugaru area of Aomori is considered to be one of the most different dialects of all the dialects of Japan. It is not necessary to learn the local dialect. Most missionaries don’t learn them, only their kids who go to school have picked them up.

Will learning Japanese make it easier for me to learn Chinese later?

Yes! Well, somewhat easier. If you learn to read Kanji, you will be able to

already read many signs in either Taiwan, Hong Kong or China even if you never study Chinese. You will be able to communicate basic ideas with the Chinese people just by using Kanji. Most the meanings of the Chinese characters that Japan shares with China are the same.

Some weaknesses of the Japanese language

- Considered a “fuzzy” language. The Japanese people don’t like to be blunt or rude. Consequently, they hesitate to express opinions in a strong and clear manner. Politicians like to use this to their advantage!
- Very few words of affection or endearment as in all European languages! Most Japanese either cannot or will not say “I love you” to their loved ones. These words do exist in Japanese, but are not part of daily vocabulary.
- No such thing as rhyming poetry!
- It takes about twice as long to say something as compared to English. English song lyrics have to be cut in half when translated into Japanese in order to keep the same rhythm.

One strength of the Japanese written language

The cool thing about using Chinese ideograph characters called Kanji is that the meaning of words becomes clear as a bell. There is no need for an etymology dictionary of Japanese words that are written in Kanji. This includes names of people as well. Most first names in any language have meanings that are often forgotten in time and can only be learned through special dictionaries, but nobody in Japan can ever forget the meaning of a Kanji. For example, how many people would know that my name, James, comes from the Hebrew name Jacob which means “deceiver”? But there is no Japanese person who does not know the meaning of famous Ichiro Suzuki’s name. It means “first man” The names of towns and cities, rivers and mountains can also be translated to English or any other language. Of course this applies to the Chinese language as well.

Copyright 2005 by James Arendt

10 things you didn't know about

Japanese

Some fun facts about the language spoken in the Land of the Rising Sun.



Japanese has many dialects. They're grouped into **Kyoto-Osaka** dialects and **Tokyo** dialects. Mutual intelligibility varies.



9th

MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGE

The majority of the speakers are in Japan or in the Japanese diaspora.

The origins of the language are unknown, since its earliest written records show a fully-formed system.



88 weeks

According to the US Department of State, that's how much it would take for an English-speaker to learn Japanese.

HONORIFICS: suffixes that express the relationship the speaker and person in question have.

- san:** most commonly used, similar to "sir" or "ma'am".
- chan:** An endearing female honorific, used for children of both genders.
- sama:** A respectful way to address someone.

3 WRITING SYSTEMS

HIRAGANA: syllabic, phonetic and used for native words, conjugations and particles.

KATAKANA: used for loanwords.

KANJI: imported from China in the 6th Century AD. Thousands of letters, of which approximately 2000 are most commonly used.



WORD ORDER IN JAPANESE

1	2	3
SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB

THE FASTEST LANGUAGE..

The average native Japanese speaker produces

7.84 Syllables per Second

The number for English is 6.19 syllables per second.

MIMETICS = words that resemble the source of the sound it represents.

むしゃり ぼーぼー
 (Mushari) (Bo-Bo-)
 [Taking a big bite] [fire burning]

...BUT DOESN'T SAY MUCH

A 2010 study concluded that, among the major languages **Japanese conveys the least amount of information per syllable.**



This illustration is courtesy of [Day Translations Inc.](#)

Chemtrails in Japan



These photos were taken in Niigata Prefecture, Japan. Can anyone please explain what these relatively low flying jets are spraying? I know they must be spraying *something*. Chemtrails? I really think so! They surely couldn't be mere vapor trails. Why do I think so? I saw a trail suddenly end while the plane kept flying! Since then I have seen them again several times over the same general area.

Photos taken on October 11, 2002 at just after 11 AM





Information about Chemtrails

Photos taken on June 7, 2005 from 7:39PM to 7:44PM



