

Treated to an Oyster snack



Getting treated to an oyster snack on my 400-mile hitchhike adventure in Northern Japan.

Rescued by two Muslim men from Pakistan on a rainy day



Shirasawa Station in Akita Prefecture near Odate City.

July 16, 2012: The previous day I sprained my back while on the road in Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture. This morning when rising at 5:20 a.m. from the bed in the capsule hotel where I spent the night, an excruciating lower back pain greeted me. It was difficult to stand up and walk. To make matters worse, though I expected the weather to be fair and sunny, a low pressure front reached Aomori causing heavy precipitation from time to time.

Nevertheless my goal was to return home to Niigata, and to hitchhike as much of the distance I could.

After checking out of the hotel at 6 a.m. I walked 30 minutes slowly to the train station pushing my luggage with wheels while putting some of my weight on it with one hand in an attempt to alleviate back pain while holding an umbrella in my other hand. The rain was constant but not too heavy. At Hirosaki Station I bought a 320 yen ticket to Nagamine station as I usually do and caught the 6:51 a.m. train. Hopefully the rain would stop upon arrival at Nagamine 25 minutes later. Because it did not, I not to get off at Nagamine but go as far as Shirazawa Station which is just before Odate City and on the other side of the mountains on the border of Akita and Aomori Prefecture. From experience I knew the weather may be different on the opposite side of the mountains. It was not. The rain was even heavier. Rather than go further and spend more money for the train, I got off at Shirasawa hoping and praying for a change in weather. The tiny Shirasawa station was only 20 or meters away from Route 7, a place to flee back to in case of a downpour. Because the station is small, it is unmanned to save the railroad operating costs. Only large train stations in Japan have a staff. There were no passengers waiting for trains. I laid down on the bench in the station waiting room trying to relieve back pain, but the bench was hard and uncomfortable. It was not a place I could rest.

I walked to Route 7 and began to hitchhike. Though today was a Monday, it was the end of a three day holiday with traffic from prefectures as far as Mie which is past Nagoya. I saw several cars with Niigata license plates.

The rain constantly changed from a light drizzle to torrents. After fleeing several times from the road back to the train station for refuge, I found a building next to the road with an overhanging roof just large enough to protect me and my luggage from the rain. There I stood holding my umbrella for the next two hours while sticking out my thumb to on coming traffic. Though much of the traffic was local, there were plenty of cars going long distances of 200 or more kilometers. None stopped for me and my lower back continued to hurt. It rained hard with thunder and lightening from time to time. For some reason the Japanese mentality changes on rainy days. They become more reluctant to stop for me. Normally I wouldn't wait much longer than 30 minutes on the same road had it been bright and sunny.

Around 10:45 a.m the rain completely stopped and the sky got a bit brighter. I now had a slot of time to hitchhike sans the umbrella! I knew it would probably not last very long.

At 11:00 a.m. a car with two men with middle eastern looking faces stopped and the driver asked me in Japanese where I wanted to go. They said they could take me to Odate City, only a few kilometers further. Normally I wouldn't accept such a short ride, but I wanted to make some progress no matter how small. The two men are in their 30s, both from Pakistan. I guessed correctly they are used car dealers. Almost everybody from Pakistan who lives in Japan is. The passenger asked me my age. He said I look very weak for somebody who is 62 years old! He knows an American who is 80 who looks better than I do! I replied I happen to be in constant pain from a strained muscle

in my lower back from yesterday. The man sheepishly smiled which meant to me he accepted my reason for looking "weak."

Though the men at first offered to take me only as far as Odate City, they said they could take me as far as Noshiro City, 60 kilometers up the road, if I didn't mind waiting from time to time as they visited certain locations along the way that related to their business. "That's fine" I replied. I was in no hurry. It started to rain hard again and I was thankful to be with them out of the rain and resting my back sitting down in the back seat of their comfortable vehicle.

For the first several minutes I conversed with the Pakistani men was all in Japanese. I called my wife on my cell phone telling her I finally caught a ride, I ended the call with an "I love you too." The passenger in front responded, "I love you three!" It turned out both the driver and his friend understood and spoke English! They were just testing my Japanese ability. This is not always true for Pakistani people. Most do not speak English with me.

We switched to talking in English. I asked them many questions about their country and told them what I believe to be true about certain current events in the middle east.

I told them that:

- al-Qaeda is a CIA creation in the *imagination* of the public. It *doesn't* exist as an organization at all.
- Osama Bin Laden had probably died a long time ago, maybe even before the end of 2001. He was not the man the U.S. Military said they killed in Pakistan on May 2, 2011.

The driver smiled with surprise that I, an American, would know such things! He agreed with me on both counts. This is exactly what many Pakistanis already believe. They know that al-Qaeda does not exist as an organized group. And they doubt that it was Osama Bin Laden who was killed in Pakistan for the simple reason the U.S. military did not show a body!

We agreed together that there are wealthy people seeking to exploit the public by creating problems where no problems exist. Freemason Albert Pike said that World War 3 would be a clash of cultures, Islamic fundamentalists against the Zionists. Islamic people certainly have a bad image in the West, but this image is not the same that I see when meeting them face to face! They are not the fearful "terrorist" types the media portrays them out to be. Both men were very friendly. They called themselves Muslims but said they were not very "good" ones because they don't always pray 5 times a day. It struck me that they would use the adjective "good" because this reminded me of Roman Catholics, some who are called a "good Catholic" and some who are not so good.

The passenger then started to talk about his faith in Allah and obeying Allah's laws. He said killing is not part of Islam, and that especially includes suicide bombers! I told him that Islamic suicide bombers have giving

Islam a very bad press in the West. He agreed but said these people are really not part of true Islam. It could be that these suicide bombers are part of the CIA mind controlled MKULTRA project and their purpose is to cause trouble where there would be no trouble.

The passenger continued to share his pure and simple faith in Allah. I asked him what he thought of Jesus Christ. He replied that Jesus, who he called "Isa" is a Messenger from Allah like Mohammad was, but that Isa was not Allah's Son. "But did you know that Jesus' mother Mary was a virgin when she conceived him? I replied. "Jesus therefore didn't have an earthly father, but a Heavenly one!" "Allah can do anything!" the Muslim man responded. "He's the Creator and does what He wants. It doesn't mean Isa was His son!" I saw they have a set answer for Christians. I don't argue with them, I just give them facts from the Bible in a loving way.

My opinion of Muslims: Their faith is simple and pure. They call Allah the Creator and believe all things were designed and created. They do not hold the pseudo-science doctrines of Darwinism and Evolution. And they call Allah a God of Love. The Muslim man said it was because of Allah's love he and his friend gave me a lift. In my book Allah is the same as the God of Love I worship. I don't care if some people claim that Allah is really the moon god. They call Allah almighty and the Creator. They are still yet only ignorant of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the sin of mankind on the cross, but they do acknowledge the doctrine of sin and that all humans are sinners.

The next time you hear or read anti-Muslim bashing material, you might do well to question the source and motivation of the author. Though I've never lived in an Islamic country, I've met many Muslims in Japan and Russia and can tell you they are not the image that the media portrays them to be.

The Pakistani men took me to Noshiro train station, a good 50 kilometers from Shirazawa. I thanked them profusely and we warmly shook hands when parting.

I took a train the rest of the way home. While on the train I continued reading my Bible from where I left off at Ezekiel chapter four and was impressed with verse

14: "Then said I, **Ah Lord GOD!...**" (emphasis on Ah Lo) After hearing the Muslim man say the name Allah so many times, it strikes me that the first 4 letters of "Ah Lord God" sound so similar! Could this be where the name Allah came from?

After I returned home, using the [Theophilus Bible program](#) on my PC, I did a search for the phrase. "Ah Lord God" and found it occurs exactly 10 times in the KJV, and only in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both prophets! Interesting, don't you think?

I also learned today that burping causes pain in my lower back muscles but sneezing does not. ☐

Last week of June adventure to Hirosaki and back



Mr. and Mrs. Kikuchi who took me to Tsuruoka City from Kisagata, Akita Prefecture

June 29 – July 1, 2012: This weekend I went to Hirosaki and back in only 12 cars traveling 768 kilometers.

The trip to Hirosaki was the fastest ever! It took only 4 cars with an average waiting time of only 9 minutes wait between cars. I arrived at 3:00pm.

On the return trip, a man took me from Noshiro city to Honjo. Rather than take me to Route 7, he said my chances of getting a ride on the expressway going further south might be better. I agreed with him, but after waiting some 30 minutes at the expressway entrance with cars whizzing past me with no place to stop, I began to think Route 7 was better after all. But it was too far to walk to.



Father with his 13 year old daughter who took me to Nikaho City, Akita Prefecture

A man with his 13 year old daughter saw me and pulled up in a parking lot next to the expressway entrance. He offered to take me to Route 7. He also didn't think my chances to get a car going on the expressway were very good. The man likes to study English and showed me he knows the difference between an R and an L sound. This is quite a feat for most Japanese! They cannot tell the difference between words like "pray" and "play" or "glass" and

“grass.” This man could. He encouraged his daughter to speak English with me but she said no. She was too shy as many young Japanese people are. Fear of embarrassment may be the main reason why the Japanese are not so good at learning a second language. I did get her to say a few words, however.

The man and his daughter went out of their way for me and took me much further than they first promised, all the way to Nikaho which is the end of the free expressway in Akita Prefecture. He said it was no problem because they would take the expressway back to Honjo.

It turned out my waiting for a ride at Honjo IC was not in vain. A man who saw me standing at the Honjo expressway entrance saw me again at Nikaho! He knew somebody must have picked me up so he decided to do so as well and took me to Kizarazu. And at Kizarazu, a young newly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Kikuchi, who also saw me standing at Honjo IC stopped for me! They took me all the way to Tsuruoka, the city on the other side of Sakata! Mrs. Kikuchi seemed so happy. She was always smiling. They had been married only 2 months.

Third June Hitchhike Adventure to Hirosaki



On a bridge in Tsuruoka. Mt. Chokai can be seen in the background.

It's now my 4rd trip to Hirosaki this month! The first one was with a friend who drove all the way, the rest by hitchhiking. I still have one more trip on the 29th of the month!

Today was supposed to rain but it turned out sunny. The train to Majima was 25 minutes late which meant I started hitchhiking at 8 a.m. Rather than walk up Route 7 as I did in the past, I opted to stay stationary. After a 25

minute wait, a 70 year former seaman who sailed the world took me a distance of about 5 minutes drive.

About 15 minutes later a man I apparently met when hitchhiking the same route last winter stopped for me! The man works at Hajima Kensetsu Co, a very talkative man who told me many things of the area. Rather than the main route of Route 7, the man took the coastal route which went more directly to his destination. I wound up in the center of Tsuruoka city. It's not a big town and I knew Route 7 had to be within walking distance. It was: A good hour hike!

Though it took me nearly 60 minutes to get to another place I could hitchhike, after arriving at the point the next ride came only 5 minutes later, Mr. Shirase whose hobby is mountain climbing. He once found on the side of Mt. Chokai the body of a man who had died within the hour. The man apparently fell. The police officials he notified said the area was not their territory and told him to contact other officials. This ticked off Mr. Shirase! He scolded them. "I'm supporting you people through my taxes, and you mean to say you won't go a bit out of your way to perform your duties?"

Mr. Shirase took me to Nikaho in Akita Prefecture. I told him that the traffic light in Niikaho City would be fine, but he insisted to take me further to a place he thought would be better for me. Often drivers make suggestions to drop me off at places that I know from experience will not be good for me. I'll suggestion an alternative but when they still insist, I will yield because I don't want to cause them any trouble. He did say, however, that if I didn't the area he would take me back to the city and its traffic signal.



Mr. Murata playing the Shakuhachi

Mr. Shirase's suggested dropping point turned out to be not agreeable for me to hitchhike, but because it was close to the expressway entrance, I opted to get off there anyway. I'm so glad I did because after only a few minutes wait, 2 cars simultaneously stopped for me! The first car was a lady. When she saw the second car stop just a few meters from her, she asked the passengers if they were willing to take me. They did, Mr. and Mrs. Murata, a very friendly couple who invited me to their home to drink tea! Mr. Murata's hobby in making and playing a unique Japanese musical instrument called the Shakuhachi. You can see the video I took of them in the previous post. Mrs. Murata plays the Koto, a stringed instrument.

After spending about an hour with the Murata family, they took me to the Kotooka Highway rest area on Route 7, a good distance the way to the next city of Noshiro. It's now 3:50 p.m. Rather than wait at the rest area, I walked along Route 7, often walking backways and holding out my sign to on coming traffic. The shoulder of the road was getting narrower and I had to stop walking at a point. A few minutes after 4 p.m. An older couple who were on their way home to Noshiro city stopped for me. The man said he would take

me to Fatatsui after dropping his wife off at their home.

After only a few minutes wait at Futatsui, a young man playing a Simon and Garfunkel song stopped. He was only going a few kilometers up the road.

I waited a considerable amount of time, at least 30 minutes at an intersection in Fatsui. It began to rain. Everybody was ignoring my sign paper that said "Odate", the next city about 40 kilometers further. After perhaps a 40 minute wait a young man who took pity on me stopped. He lives in Fatatsui and wasn't on his way in the direction I needed to go, but nevertheless out of the kindness of his heart he took me to Takanosu, about 2/3 of the way to Odate!

When we arrived at Takanosu, it had stopped raining. I walked a few meters further up the road and only a minute or so later a young man on his way to Odate stopped for me. He took me exactly where I wanted to go, a place on the opposite side of Odate on the way to Hirosaki.

The time is now 6:30 and only half an hour before sunset. I walked a couple kilometers further up the road. A man in a Mercedes Benz costing 20,000,000 yen (about \$250,000 US) stopped. His name is Mr. S (name withheld), a second generation Koran man who was born in Japan. He once had many businesses and income to the point he could afford to hire a personal chauffeur. He said he lost much of it, millions of dollars due to the sub-prime loan crises. Mr. S saw my Aomori sign and because he was on his way to Aomori City, he stopped for me. But I told him I only needed to go as far as Hirosaki, 40 kilometers before Aomori City. Mr. S took extra time to take me not only to Hirosaki, but to the very hotel I would be staying that evening! I suspected the reason Mr. S. Was so wealthy was because he had something to do with the Yakuza. He knew all the businesses in Hirosaki and even their former owners!

[June 16th Adventure from Hirosaki back Home](#)





Mari and Kurumi who took me to
Odate City

I began my journey home later than usual, first a train from Hirosaki station at 11:25 a.m to Nagamine, 3 stops out of town, arriving 10 minutes later. This puts me right on Route 7, a good place to hitchhike.

After a relatively short wait of 19 minutes, a car with two 18 year old girls stopped and offered to take me to Odate City. Their names are Mari, and Kurumi, the driver. They attend a local junior college studying to become kindergarten teachers. Kurumi received her driver's license only 3 months previous in last March.

I waited for the next car at the Route 7 Odate by-pass entrance. Twenty seven minutes later around 1 p.m. a driver pulled up and offered to take me to Omagari, now called Daizen City which is a bit south of Akita City. Daizen City is somewhat out of my way and far from Route 7, but because it is a distance of 200 kilometers or about half of the way back to Niigata, I considered it a "bird in the hand" type of situation. I knew there was a road that went from Daizen city to Route 7. Last year a Vietnamese truck driver took me to Daizen, which was *very much* out of my way at the time. But in this case considering where I was standing, I didn't think it was all that much out of the way home. However, what happened later convinced me never to accept a ride from a driver going that route again!

The road the man took was Route 105. For him it was the shortest way to Daizen City. Route 105 passes through the mountains. There were few traffic lights and the scenery was picturesque. But it became narrow and winding at a point. The guard rail on the right hand side of the road bordering the edge of the mountain was all banged up from cars that hit it! This probably happens mostly in the winter when the road is icy. There was hardly any length of that guard rail that was not dented up! Some sections of the rail were in very bad shape indicating a vehicle had hit it going at a considerable speed.

We arrived at Daizen City at 4 p.m. three hours later. I knew no matter what at least I wouldn't be passing through Akita City from that point. Akita City is often difficult to cross.

It began to rain lightly. I took out my folding umbrella and held it while pulling my luggage with wheels behind me.

After walking some 30 minutes up the road, a lady pulled over and asked where I wanted to go. I told her Route 7. She looked at me as if I was talking about some place on the other side of the country! The preponderance of the traffic was *not* going to Route 7 at all. Most drivers were on their way to Yokote City, further out of my way. Though I was walking in the right direction toward Route 7, I found later there was a major junction further up the road, and most of the traffic turned toward the left going east to Yokote, not the western direction toward the Sea of Japan that I needed to

go.

I didn't have a paper said "Honjo" so I sat down, pulled out a blank A4 sheet of paper, and wrote □□ and tried to make the lines of the characters as thick as I could to make it easily visible to drivers. After waling some 70 minutes and passing the junction that goes to Yokote, a car that had just passed me turned around and came back for me, two young men. They were friendly but listening to some awful heavy metal music, a Japanese band that imitated KISS. It sounded like souls screaming in torment in hell! In fact, the word Hell was the name of one of the numbers. I sat in the back seat with my fingers in my ears trying to block out the noise.

Honjo was much further away then I remembered, a good hour drive from Daizen. No wonder the lady who stopped earlier didn't want to take me there. In the future I will not consider the "via Daizen route" a viable option.

The two men took me to Ugo Honjo Sation from where I took a train the rest of the way home. It was getting dark and still raining, and I was in time for the very last possible train. I arrived home 30 minutes past midnight.

[June 15 Adventure from Niigata to Hirosaki](#)



The scene of Route 7 near Majima station. The sign says Majima Bridge.

June 15, 2012: The day is bright and sunny with thin and wispy cirrus clouds. Again as I did the previous week, I started off from Majima station on Route 345 at 7:35 AM. This time I didn't catch the first ride till 8:25, about 50 minutes later. The driver was a cook on his way to work at a restaurant in Sasagarenagare, a spa and resort area in northern Niigata. His name is Mr. Toki., a very friendly man who was constantly smiling. It may be redundant to call him "friendly" for all who voluntary stop for me are friendly.

The only drivers who are sometimes not friendly nor talkative are the ones who reluctantly picked me because I approached them when they were parked and asked them to. For this reason, unless I'm absolutely desperate for a ride, I don't like to approach drivers sitting in their car. Most of them will only say no. The ones who do say yes are still sometimes reluctant and fearful. I would rather they come to me out of their own volition and offer me a ride. One lady who I approached actually scolded me for not taking the train! It doesn't make for a pleasant journey to have to deal with people like that.

Sasagarenagare is a 15 minute drive from Majima on lonely Route 345 with few cars. I had hoped to get a ride as far as the junction of Route 7 from where there would be more traffic going north. I walked about a 100 meters further up the road to the end of the shop and hotel area. About 40 minutes later at 9:30 a.m, a car that had just passed turned around and came back for me. The driver's name is Teru and he was on his way to Hokkaido!

Teru has been spending his retirement years traveling and camping around Japan. Though his home is in Amagasaki next to Osaka, he knows the Tohoku and Hokkaido regions very well. He goes from camp ground to camp ground. In the day he rides around the area on a folding bicycle which he carries easily in the back of his car. I suggested to Teru for him to take a free stretch of the expressway to save time, but he was no hurry to go anywhere. Teru preferred to take the slower but scenic coastal road. He took me all the way to Akita city, a good distance of nearly 200 kilometers from Sasagarenagare! In spite of a relatively show start out of Niigata, this ride more than made up for it. I arrived Akita City at 12:30 p.m.



Maiko

At Akita City, I arranged to meet a lady who had picked me up last year, July 29. Her name is Maiko and she's a nurse care who cares for the elderly. I have friends in Akita and encouraged her to visit them. We had lunch together. After about an hour, Maiko took me to a spot on Route 7 near where she first met me. I didn't want Maiko to go too far out of her way for me. The spot where she dropped me off was heavily congested with mostly city traffic.

I had to wait 2 whole hours for the next ride! The next town of Noshiro was 50 kilometers away. Everybody ignored my sign that said "Noshiro". Finally I put it away and just stuck out my thumb. It was about 4 p.m when the next car stopped: Two men on their way to Noshiro! They took the expressway and went a bit out of their way to take me to Futatsui on Route 7 just past Noshiro.



Children walking home from school/

The next major city is Odate, about 40 kilometers further, and it was now

around 5 p.m. After waiting only a minute, a man driving a rather expensive looking car saw my Odate sign and stopped. He was an interesting man, a watch retailer, whose hobby is collecting Rolex watches! He has a 40 year old daughter who is still single, a high school teacher. He said his daughter doesn't want to marry because she saw the way he treated her mother, the "teishu-kanpaku" style, meaning, the MAN is the absolute lord over the house and he expects his wife to fulfill his every whim and desire! I don't think his daughter needs to fear such treatment in marriage because the younger generation of Japanese men are not inclined to treat their wives so bossy and discourteously as their father's generation did.



Setting sun over Mt. Iwaki near Hirosaki. Mt. Iwaki is an inactive volcano.

It was after 6 p.m when I arrived in Odate. I walked a bit up Route 7. The next major city is Hirosaki and my destination, about 40 kilometers further. A young man stopped, a dentist by the name of Shuho. He's from Saitama but is now living in Hirakawa next to Hirosaki. Shuho graciously went a bit further for me to take me to Hirosaki Station. From there the hotel where I spent the night was only a 20 minute walk away.

[June 10 Adventure Hitchhiking from Hirosaki to Niigata](#)



Mr. and Mrs. Sakura in their living room

Sunday, June 10, 2012: I hitchhiked 404 kilometers (253 miles) from Aomori Prefecture to Niigata City in 9 cars. They consisted of 4 married couples, two small children, 4 single men, 2 ladies and one single couple. A highlight of this trip was visiting Mr. and Mrs. Sakurada's home in Noshiro. They picked me up when hitchhiking exactly one month before on May 6 during my

previous trip back to Niigata. I also made 3 new Facebook friends.

I left the capsule hotel in Hirosaki bright and early to catch the 6:51 a.m train, the first one going to Akita Prefecture. The fare to Nagamine, 24 minutes and 3 stations down the line, was only 320 yen. Nagamine is next to Route 7, the highway toward home.

The sky was overcast and there was a light precipitation. I opened the small folding umbrella I often carry with me. Traffic on the road was sparse. Around 7:35 a.m. a middle aged couple stopped for me. They saw my Odate sign and turned around. Their destination was Odate but decided take me all the way to Higashi Noshiro, an extra distance of 80 kilometers round trip out of their way!

I sent a SMS text message to Mr. Sakurada just before I arrived, and he replied he would be waiting for me at the convenience store near the Higashi Noshiro exit of the expressway. I arrived a few minutes before him.



One of the riceburgers I had for lunch.

Mr. and Mrs. Sakuada were great hosts. They gave me a good breakfast of fish and rice balls with salad, and a lunch bag for my trip: Two rice-burgers! In the 34 some years I've lived in Japan, today was a first time ever for me to even see a rice-burger! They were delicious!

I spent about an hour at the Sakurada home. During that time a lady friend of theirs visited, a true Bible believing and Bible reading Christian who attends a small church in Noshiro. The population of Japan is said to be 1% Christian, but I would say Bible readers are probably much less, only two or three out of a thousand. Her name is Mikiko and she became my Facebook friend!



Mikiko

Mr. & Mrs Sakurada offered to take me to Akita City, 50 kilometers from Noshiro, just as they did before when I first met them. But because they had no business in Akita City that day, I didn't want to be a burden to them. I told them that the expressway entrance of Higashi Noshiro which is only a few minutes drive from their home would be fine. The time was now about 10:30 a.m.

At 11:05 a.m. a young man named Yusuke stopped for me and took me to Akita City. Yusuke is a software developer. He wanted to drop me off at the train station, but because it was a good hour drive from Noshiro and because the train would be leaving an hour later at 12:10, there wasn't quite enough time

to catch it. If I had caught that train, I would have taken it 3 stops down the line to get out of town and back to Route 7. The next train was 2 hours later, too long to wait. Yusuke therefore took me to Route 7 at the point it leaves Akita City going toward Yamagata, the way to Niigata.

Though it was *not supposed* to rain in Akita that day, it did, a constant but light precipitation. I wasn't in a very good location to hitchhike. The traffic was heavy but going quite fast. I walked up the road for at least an hour in the rain holding my umbrella and pulling my luggage behind me (it has wheels). I hoped to find an intersection with a good traffic light, but there was none. I was now in a desolate area in country.

A middle age lady took pity on me and stopped. She told me she would take me to a nearby train station. I declined her offer because she wasn't going very far. Twenty or so more minutes later it began to rain harder and I still hadn't caught a ride. I regretted not accepting the lady's offer. After walking further up the road to what I thought was an intersection, I saw it was actually an overpass going over a crossroad. The shoulder of the road became narrower which made it even harder for drivers to stop. I turned around and walked back the way I had just come to where the shoulder was wider. I stopped walking and started praying while holding out my thumb, smiling and facing traffic.



Route 7 in Akita close to the Yamagata border. Mt. Chokai is in the background.

The rain continued. About 10 minutes later another lady stopped. She was going as far as Michikawa station, about 20 kilometers up the road. Progress! When we arrived at Michikawa, the rain had stopped. There was a traffic light with a push button to turn the signal red for pedestrians to cross the road. I pushed the button every time a group of cars approached me to stop the traffic. This way I get a good look at the drivers faces and see if anyone will make eye contact with me. The first person who does usually offers me a ride. It also gives the drivers more time to check me out and decide whether they want to pick me up.



Another view of Route 7 close to Yamagata

After a few minutes a middle age married couple stopped and took me to Sakata city. The husband said his ancestors are samurai. Samurai families often have records of their family tree of hundreds of years. He knew some interesting facts of history of the area, things you won't find in a school history textbook.

The stretch of Route 7 from Kisagata to Sakata passes by Mt. Chokai which sits on the boarder between Akita Prefecture and Yamagata Prefecture. The Daimyo (feudal lords who were vassals of the Shogun) of Akita and the Daimyo of Tsuruoka quarreled over which prefecture would lay claim to Mt. Chokai's summit. They took their dispute to the Tokugawa government in Tokyo. Because the Tsuruoka Daimyo was richer than the Akita Daimyo, the Tokugawa government awarded the summit to the Tsuruoka Daimyo. He was lord over the Shonai area of Yamagata Prefecture. One of the officials of the Akita Daimyo took responsibility for the failure to gain Mt. Chokai's summit for Akita, and committed seppuku, also known as hara-kiri.



Keita, my new Facebook friend.

The couple took me to the other side of Sakata from where there would be more traffic to Tsuruoka, the next big town about 30 kilometers away. Three young men averaging 26 years old saw my sign and stopped for me. They are in a network marketing business called Amway. One of them became my Facebook friend!



Mr. and Mrs. Hayasaka with their son Ryodai

The three young men dropped me off at an intersection on the Route 7 bypass. The city traffic was heavy with few cars going very far. I walked further up the road hoping to get to a better intersection. After a few minutes, Mr. And Mrs. Hayasaka with their young son, Ryodai, stopped for me. They took me to the very edge of Tsuruoka proper, a few kilometers further up the road. The husband asked me when I hoped to returned home. "Of course, sometime this evening!" I replied. He gave me an incredulous look indicating he didn't think I would make it. It surprised me thought so considering the distance I had already come that day, 250 kilometers with only around 150 kilometers remaining. With 2 hours of summer sunlight remaining I considered it a piece of cake!



One of the tunnels of the Nihonkai Tohoku Expressway. The purpose of the blue lighting on the ceiling may be an attempt to keep the driver alert.

I walked further up the road. After only a few minutes a lady stopped and offered me a ride as far as Sanze, half way to Atsumi Onsen. She took the brand new stretch of the Nihonkai Tohoku, a section of the expressway that is

still toll free.



The single couple who took me to Sanze

From Sanze on Route 7 I had to wait at least 30 minutes for the next ride. It was a young single couple who saw my Atsumi Onsen sign. The car was a station wagon with two seats in the front but none in the back. I sat down on the floor next to the back door.



Atsumi Onsen

The couple didn't go quite as far as I had hoped they would go. The end of the Nihonkai Tohoku expressway was yet a couple kilometers up the road, walking distance. I knew there would be more traffic from that point going further. It was now around 6 pm, an hour before dusk. The sky was blue with fleecy clouds, and the low sun illuminated the scenery in golden hues. I walked about 20 minutes.



Atsumi Onsen

Just before arriving to the access point of the Nihonkai Tohoku expressway, a car coming from the way I just walked stopped about half a football field distance up the road. It was a young married couple with their 5 year old daughter. They were headed home to Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture, not far from Nagoya. This was the final ride for me that day. Their route would pass directly through Niigata City! Toyota City is 580 kilometers from the point the family picked me up. It would take them 7 more hours to get home arriving round 2 a.m.!

The husband is from Tsuruoka and was visiting his parents. It was now about 6:30 p.m. He offered to take me to Niigata station from where I could catch a short train ride home, but rather than have them get off the expressway which would delay their journey by at least a half hour, I asked them to let me off at the Toyosaka Service area just inside Niigata city. Another stretch of the yet unfinished Nihonkai Tohoku expressway began at Murakami, about 70 kilometers from Niigata city. I knew the expressway ran close to and parallel with the Shinhaku train line. I wasn't sure what the closest train station was, but knew it had to be in walking distance from Toyosaka SA.

It was close to 8 p.m when we arrived Toyosaka SA. The sun had completely set. My eyesight has weakened the past year, and it's especially harder for me to see in low light conditions. The Toyosaka service area was more like a

small parking area with no concession stands and only a restroom. I knew there had to be an access road to it leading to a city street, but the exit to the access road was not apparent. I walked in one direction and then another only to see the expressway on one side and dense forage on the other. I went to a lighted area in the restroom and studied the highway map, The map didn't give me enough detail to determine a direction. I then used the map / position locator feature of my cell phone. It helped me several times before when I wound up in an unknown area. Sure enough, the cell phone map showed roads leading to the service area! With renewed confidence, I walked a new direction, one toward a lighted area and saw the exit of the service area. It lead to a city road. But because it was dark, I still didn't have my bearings and was unsure of the direction to the train station. Again I pulled out the cell phone, determined my location, and walked a hundred meters in the direction I thought might be correct. I stopped and again checked my location. The map clearly showed me I had walked away from the station. I turned around and within 15 minutes found the train station. From there it was only a few hundred yen fare to home. I arrived around 9:30 p.m.

That evening I accessed my Facebook account and wrote to my 3 new Facebook friends that I had returned home safely. Mr. Hayasaka replied: "Wow, you really made it back Sunday evening as you said you would. Congratulations!" I've been in far worst situations than today and still was able to arrive to my destination thanks to the help of my "Higher Power." His name is Yeshua Hamashiach, AKA Jesus of Nazareth.

Summer Adventure Hitchhiking to Aomori City



Route 345 from Majima with my luggage in the foreground.

On June 8, 2012: I hitchhiked 402 kilometers from Majima Station in Murakami, Niigata Prefecture, to Aomori City. The drivers consisted of one elderly couple, two recently married young men, a man about my age driving a large truck carrying tons of rice, a car with 3 ladies and a man, and finally, a middle age lady who took me to the very door of my destination.

Hitchhiking from Niigata to Aomori in the summer is much easier than in the winter. I'm always in a race with the sun to catch the last ride before dark. In the summer I have 2 extra hours to work with. In the winter I often can only hitchhike as far as Odate city in Akita, 100 kilometers short of the goal.

I began hitchhiking on Route 345 which runs along the coast of the Sea of Japan. It's a rather desolate area with not much traffic. However the drivers are usually going at least 20 or more kilometers.



The first driver who picked me up. The background is Nezumigaseki in northern Niigata on the coast of the Sea of Japan.

After only a few minutes the first car stopped, an elderly couple. They took me as far as Nesumigasaki, an area with many scenic views. I thought to walk from there to a large parking area at Atsumi Onsen, a popular spa visited by many tourists. But after seeing a road sign that said Atsumi Onsen is 10 kilometers further up the road, I quit walking. I had already walked about 3 kilometers.



Motomu who took me to Akita City.

After only a few minutes after I stopped walking, a young man named Motomu who works at Kanshiwazaki Nuclear Power plant picked me up and took me all the way to Akita City, 170 kilometers further or 42% of the way toward my goal! Motomu was on his way back to his home town to visit his parents. Soon his company will transfer him to an oil rig on a small island near Australia. I asked him if his job was dangerous, "Yes," he replied. But at least he'll be able to take his wife with him.

Motomu dropped me off at Route 7 in the center of Akita city. The traffic there was very heavy. Holding out a paper sign showing the town of my destination is ineffective in such a situation. I found it's best just to hold out a thumb and hope for a curious driver to stop and ask me where I want to go. I'm happy just to get a ride to the edge of town from where drivers will be going longer distances.



Two of the ladies in the car that took me to Oiwake just north of Akita City.

In only a few minutes a car with 4 elderly people pulled up, 3 ladies and a man. They found it strange to see a foreigner hitchhiking. It was their first time ever to pick up a hitchhiker. They took me to the Oiwake, outside of Akita city.

From Oiwake, a newly wed young man took me to Odate City, about 90 kilometers further. It was only 2:45 p.m. when we arrived!



The truck driver and his rig that took me to Aomori City.

I stood close to a Lawson's convenience store on Route 7 and held out a sign that says, "Aomori." To my surprise, a large truck stopped! It's quite rare for such a big rig to pull over to the side of the road for me. The driver said he would take me to Hirosaki city, but ended up going further than I expected and went to the Aomori city Route 7 bypass! It was now 5 p.m.

I continued to walk further up Route 7. I was now in actual walking distance to my goal! But it was still pretty far and would have taken me 3 more hours had I walked it. The final driver was a lady who went out of her way a few kilometers to take me to the very door of my friend's house.

[Hitchhike Adventure from Hamamatsu City back to Niigata](#)





Yusuke and Noriko, the first people to pick me up.

Sunday, May 20, 2012: Today was the last day of my trip and my return to home. The challenge was to hitchhike 600 kilometers (about 400 miles), the same distance I traveled on day one of my journey, but this time I would be crossing Tokyo. It's not easy to cross Tokyo by hitchhiking, I usually take the train. Today I was successful.

After waiting a whole hour at Mikatahara PA next to Hamamatsu, a young man approached me and offered me a ride. His name is Yusuke and he was with his girlfriend, Noriko. It's not too often that young single couples pick me up; they consist of only 3% of the total.



Mt. Fuji viewed from Fujikawa Service Area

Yusuke and Noriko, both from Nagoya, were going mountain climbing that day and would be getting off the expressway at Shizuoka city. They offered to take me as far as the Fujikawa Service area. From Fujikawa there is a magnificent view of Mt. Fuji in good weather.

After close to another hour of waiting, a truck driver from Kure City in Hiroshima Prefecture offered me a ride as far as Kawasaki which is near Tokyo! Truck drivers are only 6% of the total of people who pick me up, and a truck driver on the expressway is probably less than half that percentage. He was a friendly guy, and quite intelligent compared to many truck drivers I've ridden with. He urged me not to return home to Niigata that day but to spend the night in Tokyo so I could see the total solar eclipse the next day, Monday May 21! "I can't," I replied, "I've got to be home by evening. We have a little dog that goes crazy with loneliness when nobody is around! If I don't return home tonight, there won't be anybody home to care for her!" The truck driver replied, "You're going to miss an opportunity that happens only once in a lifetime for a dog!"



Dog riding in the back of a motorcycle at Kokuho PA in Kawasaki.

The truck driver took me to Kokuho PA in Kawasaki. I had thought to walk to a train station from there and take trains to cross Tokyo to get to the Kanetsu expressway, but changed my mind thinking I might not only save money but time if I could catch a ride to some place in Saitama. It paid off. A married couple saw my Niigata sign and offered to take me to Narimasu station on the

Tobu Tojo line! Great! From Narimasu it was only a short train ride to a station near the Miyoshi service area on the Kanetsu expressway, the highway home.

From Miyoshi SA 3 more vehicles took me back to Niigata. One was a couple from Brazil. Non-Japanese who pick me up are only 2% of the total of 2407 drivers who picked me up since I've been keeping statistics from August 2003.

[Hitchhike Adventure from Osaka to Hamamatsu City](#)



Left to right: Driver from Hiroshima Prefecture and Mr. Sayama, my hitchhike partner.

May 18, 2012: Today was the second day of my trip. The main purpose was to help my friend in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, to purchase and set up a laptop PC. It's only 290 kilometers (180 miles) from Osaka to Hamamatsu, half the distance I hitchhiked the day before from Niigata to Osaka, "a piece of cake!"

It was just after 9 a.m and only few minutes after arriving to the Suita Service Area of the Meishin Expressway when a young man walked close to where I was standing. He looked at me and I guessed immediately that he also was a hitchhiker! I've met up with other people hitchhiking, but it's pretty rare, only a handful of people in thousands of times. The man, Mr. Sayama, was on his way to Yokohama, about twice the distance I needed to go that day.

When the Japanese people tell me that hitchhiking is uncommon in Japan, I

tell them that's why it's so easy to do it; I have no competition! Of course I'm joking. I didn't consider Mr. Sayama a competitor, but a potential partner in my journey.



Udon noodle lunch

I told Mr. Sayama that he need not worry about me. I would give him preference in case the driver was not willing to pick up more than one passenger. It turned out that we became a team! I met the first driver who took us both to Otsu Service Area in Shiga Prefecture, and Mr. Sayama met the second driver, a man from Fukuyama Hiroshima Prefecture who took me as far as Shinshiro PA before Hamamatsu, and Mr. Sayama to Gotemba. The Hiroshima man bought us all a nice lunch of Udon noodles.

From Shinshiro PA a man working for an IT company took me to Hamamatsu Station.

[May Hitchhike Adventure to Osaka](#)



Jackie next to his French sports car

May 17, 2012: Osaka is about 600 kilometers or 400 miles from home. I made it in a very good time, 8.5 hours in 4 vehicles spending less than \$10 that day for food and a bit of public transportation to get me started.

The first driver, Tomoshi, is an airplane mechanic serving in the Japan Self Defense Force. He's stationed in Higashi Matsushima, Miyagi Prefecture, very

close to where the tsunami of March 11, 2011 hit. Tomoshi was on his way to Kanazawa while his wife was in labor. He was hoping to be in time for the birth of his first child! I don't know if he made it in time or not, but he sure helped me get to my destination in a good time. Kanazawa is exactly half way to Osaka from Niigata.

The last driver, Jackie, a rather affluent looking businessman who speaks good English, was driving a French sports car, a Peugeot. I showed his photo to my Japanese friends, and they all recognized the car by the symbol on the hood.

Jackie is in the insurance business, a *dealer* with insurance companies! It's not very often I get to travel in an imported vehicle speaking to the driver in English, but even rarer still, Jackie is one of those uncommon people in the world who is very knowledgeable about [who the real rulers of the world](#) are, their secret societies, and what their agenda is!

Jackie seemed to appreciate hearing what knowledge I have about the subject. He went out of his way to take me to the very area where my friend in Osaka lives.

[May 6, 2012 Hitchhike Adventure: Hirosaki to Akita City](#)



Miss Tomoko. She took
from from Nagamine to
Igarigaseki

Hirosaki was under a clear blue sky when I boarded the first train out of town at 6:54 a.m. My destination was home to Niigata and I was hoping to hitchhike all the way back from Nagamine station, just 3 train stations from

Hirosaki and right on Route 7, a straight shot to Niigata. It turned out I was able to hitchhike in 5 rides only as far as Akita City. It started to rain just before car #5 and was raining heavily when I arrived in Akita City, still 270 kilometers from home. Heavy rain means the train the rest of the journey.

Car #1: A young single lady who works at Furutobe Spa. She took me as far as Igarigaseki, about half way to Odate City.

Car #2: A middle age man to Odate.

Car #3: A truck driver to Takenosu, part way to Noshiro City. I was surprised he stopped. The truck carries Home Center supplies. It's not very often for truck drivers to stop for me.



Lady who took me to
Noshiro City

Car #4: A middle age lady driving a van to Higashi Noshiro. She past me by, turned around and offered me a ride. It's not uncommon for drivers to turn around after considering for a few moments whether to pick me up. I explained to the lady some principles of my faith from the Book of Genesis. Favorite words in the Japanese language are "nature" and expressions of appreciation such as "thank you". I told her that if Genesis 1:1 is true, and we are created beings by God, shouldn't it be a part of our nature to say, "thank you" to our Creator for life and all things He created? She agreed and understood that point quite well!



Mrs. and Mr. Sakurada of Noshiro City

Car #5: Mr. And Mrs. Sakurada of Noshiro City who took me to Akita station. Mr. Sakurada loves history and he was completely turned on when I explained to him the real reason the Japanese Tokugawa government of the 16th century began to persecute Christians in Nagasaki. It was not the true Gospel of Christ that the Tokugawa government feared, it was the influence of ROME, the Roman Catholic church, the Pope and the Jesuits!! The Japanese government knew the power of Rome and what the Pope did to Europe. The Nagasaki Christians they persecuted were all Roman Catholics, people who would have their ultimate allegiance to the Pope, not to the Japanese government. Tokugawa Iemitsu feared revolt. He feared Japan would become a colony of Rome. He therefore closed Japan to foreigners, but *ESPECIALLY* to Roman Catholic countries like Portugal. He had no problem with the English or Dutch because he knew they broke off from Rome after the Protestant reformation. I told that to the driver and it was like turning on a light in his head. He immediately put together the dots and was totally amazed!

Visit to Hirosaki Park during Cherry Blossom Time



Visit Hirosaki Park in Aomori Japan to see beautiful cherry blossoms.

Spring hitchhike adventure: Nagano, Osaka, Tokyo



The red line shows my route from Niigata to Nagano, Osaka, Tokyo, and back to Niigata. You can see that Niigata Prefecture is neighbor to Fukushima. The damaged nuclear reactors are only 160 kilometers away from my home. I hope you do not believe the hype of extreme radiation levels that some alternative media people are broadcasting about

Fukushima! (Soon to be posted on this site.) Click on the map to see more detail.



Two young men who took me from Sakae PA to Yoneyama SA in Niigata



Mr. and Mrs. Hamada of Mie Prefecture. They took me from Niigata to Midoriko PA near Shiojiri City, Nagano Prefecture.



Mr. Tanaka who took me to Osaka



Tomoko (32) who took me to Tokyo from the Makinohara SA in Shizuoka Prefecture

On Wednesday, April 18th, I began another week long hitchhike adventure. This time I hitchhiked 1430 kilometers (894 miles) in 17 vehicles. Among these were only 2 trucks. The drivers and passengers consisted of 6 married couples, 1 single lady, and the rest male company employees. The total cost of the trip was about 10,000 yen or around \$78 US. About 4000 yen was used for transportation in and around Tokyo. The Kanto area of which Tokyo is the center is always more expensive than Kansai (Kyoto / Osaka / Kobe) because it's much larger and my destinations are usually from one end to the other. When in Kanto, time for me is more important than saving money by hitchhiking. It's a nice place to visit, but I'm glad I don't live there. I especially would not want to be in Tokyo in the event of a major earthquake!

My first stop was Shiojiri in Nagano Prefecture to see a dear friend, Esther who has stomach cancer. The second, Osaka to see a friend, and the third, Kanto, Tokyo and vicinity where I visited 5 different homes, fixed one PC, setup Skype on another PC, and attended an inspiring fellowship dinner with old and new friends.

Day 1, Wednesday April 18: Destination Shiojiri City, Nagano Prefecture

Car #1: An older couple who took me to Sanjo city. They stopped for me after a 30 minute wait. The wife was very talkative.

Car #2: Two young men (see photo) driving a truck on their way to Gifu. They are some kind of engineers fixing farm machinery. They dropped me off at Yoneyama SA on the Hokuriku expressway.

Car #3: Mr. and Mrs. Hamada from Mie Prefecture (see photo). They went to a spa in Niigata and stayed 3 days. The closest route to Mie Prefecture from Niigata is through Nagano and they would be passing the Midoroko Parking area! Esther's house is close enough to walk to from Midoroko! Well, it's still 4.5 kilometers and so I hitchhiked.

Car #4 An older man the 4.5 kilometers to Esther's house. I spent 3 hours with her then took a train to Chino (because it was too late to hitchhike further) and stayed a night in Tateshina and another night in Fujimi Town with friends.

Day 3, Friday April 20. Destination Osaka:

Car #5 A truck from Suwa SA to Okurogawa PA on the Chou expressway. The driver's company markets Shingen Mochi, a Japanese sweet made with rice. He gave me a box to give to friends.

Car #6 A foreign couple from Peru! It's not often I meet foreigners. Neither of them could speak English and my high school Spanish is practically non-existent. I talked mostly with the wife all in Japanese. They were going just north of Nagoya, a bit out of my way. At first I asked them to drop me off at Enakyo SA because it is before a junction that goes south of Nagoya connecting to a faster route going to Osaka, but after 30 minutes of waiting for a ride and still nobody stopping, and because the Peru couple had stopped at Enakyo for lunch, I was able to catch them again before they left the service area and asked them to take me further to Uchitsutoge which is closer to Nagoya.

Car #7 Mr. Tanaka (see photo) to a bus stop just before Osaka! It was great to talk to Mr. Tanaka. He told me his wife is somewhat fearful every time he has to travel on business. He called her on his cell phone so I could introduce myself. I gave a Japanese New Testament to Mr. Tanaka to give to his wife and wrote a little message in the side cover for her.

Day 4, Saturday April 21. Destination Tokyo:

Car #8: The distance from Osaka to Tokyo was the longest leg of my journey, some 530 kilometers. I tried to get an early start and arrived at the Suita SA by 9 a.m. After a 30 minute wait two men on their way to Kyoto offered me a ride. One of them remarked he thought I was probably a Christian missionary of some sort. Both men were friendly and talkative. They took me to Katsuragawa Service close to Kyoto. Just before we parted, one man offered to buy me a cup of coffee but then gave me a 1000 yen bill instead! It's not often drivers offer me money. Of course I never ask them for it.

Car #9 A friendly married couple to Otsu SA in Shiga Prefecture, just past Kyoto.

Car #10 Mr. Setto on his way back home to a city near Suwa in Nagano. At first I thought to go all the way with Mr. Setto to Nagano because it's only 200 kilometers from Tokyo. But because it is on the Chou expressway and my destination is the end of the Tomei expressway, I decided to get off at the Owari Ichinomiya service area hoping for a ride toward Shizuoka on the Tomei.

Car #11 A man to Akahata PA on the Tomei expressway. It was a bit of a wait to meet him.

Car #12 Mr. and Mrs Maesada in their little car to Makinohara Service area in Shizuoka. It was such fun talking to them because they laughed often after hearing of my adventures. It could have been because I mentioned that the first driver today gave me a gift of money that Mr. Maesada pulled 3000 yen out of his wallet and handed it to me! I felt embarrassed and said I don't expect to receive money, I am thankful for just the ride, but Mr. Maesada insisted on giving it. Receiving a gift of cash from drivers twice in the same day is probably a first for me.

Car #13 Miss Tomoko (see photo) all the way to Tokyo! I had to wait a whole hour for Tomoko to come, but it was worth every minute! She was on her way back home to Saitama after surfing with a friend. Because she was going to Saitama, she would be getting off at Yoga, the end of the Tomei, which is exactly the place I would be meeting a friend. Tomoko listened attentively while I shared with her basic Bible stories from the Book of Genesis and the Gospels for the next 2.5 hours. I hope to continue to communicate with her through Facebook.

Day 7, Tuesday April 24. Destination Niigata and home:

Car #14: Mr. Nozaki who took me to Kamisato SA from Miyoshi SA on the Kanetsu Expressway. He said I'm the first foreigner he's ever met. I hope to stay in touch with him.

Car #15: An elderly couple to Komayose PA just past Maebashi in Gunma Prefecture. The husband who drove seemed to have a hearing problem but his wife understood me better.

Car #16: A company president to Akagi Kogen. I bought lunch there, a bowl of curry rice.

Car #17: The final driver, Mr. Tanaka (the second Tanaka this trip, not related), is from Kawasaki and had an appointment in Niigata city after 5 p.m. He was the most interesting person yet to meet because though he said he is a member of Sokagakkai – a sect of Buddhism which is very aggressive in proselyting others to their cause – he did not push his religion on me at all. Instead he told me of his interest in the Bible. He likes the stories of the Old Testament, and is interested in learning more about Jesus Christ. Not only that, but Mr. Tanaka is one of those very rare Japanese who is very knowledgeable about the Freemasons, the [Bildbergers](#), the [Council on Foreign](#)

[Relations](#) (CFR), [the Illuminati](#), and even the [Vatican / Jesuit connection](#)! I asked him how he came to learn about the New World Order conspiracy of world take over. He replied that he thirsts for knowledge and spends much time in bookstores buying and reading any book he thinks can help him in his journey in life.

Mr. Tanaka graciously took me all the way to my home in Niigata city. It was not really out of the way for him, but because my area is far from the expressway, the detour added at least 30 more minutes to the arrival time of his destination. He said he would still arrive in time.

Cherry blossom viewing is extremely popular among all Japanese. Families and friends often have a picnic under the cherry trees in full bloom. They sit on tarps and eat lunch and or drink rice wine. When I left Niigata on April 18th, the cherry blossoms had not yet bloomed and I wondered if I would see them this year. Nagano is a bit further south but higher elevation and the cherry blossoms hadn't bloomed there either. But both Osaka and Tokyo have already finished their cherry blossom season this year. When I returned to Niigata the following Tuesday, the cherry blossoms had bloomed and were 2 days past mid point. The blossoms last one week and at the time of this post are already nearly gone. I'll have one more opportunity to see them in Hirosaki Park this coming Sunday, April 29. Hirosaki is 400 kilometers north of Niigata.

[Hitchhike adventure to Hirosaki](#)



Couple who took me from Adatara to Bandaisan SA on the Banetsu Expressway

March 2, 2012: It's been nearly two months since my last trip. Sometimes I wonder if getting older will discourage folks from picking me up, but this

adventure proves to me otherwise. It was one of the least expensive considering the distance traveled. The round trip was 906 kilometers in 11 vehicles.

At 7:35 a.m. I began hitchhiking along route 345 from Majima station, just past Murakami. This road runs parallel to the Sea of Japan and very close to it. The day was sunny and views of the coast lovely. Only 10 minutes later a lady picked me up and took me as far as Sanboku, about 20 kilometers up the road and just before the connection to route 7, the main highway going north.

From Samboku I walked about 3.5 kilometers in 55 minutes to Fuya. There were several tunnels along the way. One was about 600 meters long, too long and dangerous to walk through seeing it had no sidewalk for pedestrians, and the traffic was medium. Adjacent to that tunnel closer to the coast was another tunnel that ran parallel to it. It was shorter and for some reason closed to traffic. I could see the end of the tunnel and hoped that there would be a road going further. I walked through it and found yet more short tunnels, all closed to traffic, and walked through them. All the way I saw no one but apparently some do walk through them because I saw footprints and bicycle tracks entering the tunnels. Finally I came back to the main highway, route 7, close to Fuya station. I walked to an intersection with a traffic signal and began hitchhiking again.

From Fuyu an older man took me to Atsumi Onsen, a tourist area with a large "Michi no Eki" or parking area with shops and restaurants.

From Atsumi Onsen a mother and son took me to Tsuruoka city, about 140 kilometers from home. Often I get stuck for a while at this point, but shortly afterward a truck driver took me to Sakata city, 20 kilometers further.

I've been stuck for a while at Sakata as well. The next large city is Akita, a good 80 kilometers away. But today a man coming all the way from Osaka picked me up when seeing my Akita sign, and it turned out he was traveling all the way to a town in Aomori right next to my destination! His name is Mr. Kajiwara, and we had a great conversation the entire trip, about 4 hours. He bought me lunch and took me to Hirosaki station, actual walking distance to the hotel where I stayed that night.

Meeting a man from "the strongest country in the world"



Meeting a truck driver in Japan from Afganistan