

Road trip to Tokyo



Mother with her 7 week old baby

Yesterday I had a very smooth trip hitchhiking to Tokyo from Niigata in only two cars. This was an encouragement to me because the previous 3 trips were difficult and caused me considerable discomfort.

The first driver was a lady with a 7 week old baby in the car seat in the back. She took me to the Sanjo-Tsubame interchange of the Hokuriku expressway. From there I took a 180 yen 5 kilometer bus ride to Sakae parking area.

At the parking area I saw two bikers, one of whom appeared to be a foreigner. The Japanese biker told me, "Japanese people don't like to pick up hitchhikers." I replied, "Some do!"



Eddy

And after a relatively short wait at Sakae, I was picked up by two men. The driver's name is Eddy, a real estate agent, who spoke some English. He told me he is a Christian and proved it by sharing some of his favorite Bible scriptures with me! Usually the Japanese Christians I meet are merely church goers whose religion appears to be more of tradition than real faith, but I could tell that Eddy is different. He recently married a lady from Harbin China and said he will visit me in October after picking up his wife at Niigata airport. He wants me to do a little ceremony to give him and his wife a blessing for their marriage. I am honored to have Eddy for a new friend.

I told Eddy I have a lot of Chinese Bibles at home and I would be happy to send him one. He promptly gave me 1000 yen to do so. Upon returning home to Niigata, that was one of the first things I did. Eddy called me the next day

thanking me for the Bible. It is an entire Bible in new Chinese for the People's Republic of China, and I would be happy to send one to anybody in exchange for a donation to cover postage.

Fun hitchhike back home from Saitama



Tuesday, August 10, 2010: Today I had another relatively hard experience hitchhiking. The root of the word "hitchhike" comes from "hitch" (to ride) and "hike" (to walk) and today I did a whole lot of walking, more than yesterday.



Children of the
mother who took me
to Hanazono

In the beginning it went very well. A lady going to Nagano said she will take me to the Kamisato service area, but as we approached Hanazono, we faced a big traffic jam that was caused by a car accident. The electronic sign said it would take 70 minutes to travel the next 20 kilometers! So she decided to get off at the Hanazono interchange and take the low road. This meant that I had to get off at Hanazono.



Traffic jam due to
accident. The sign
says "70 minutes
to go 12
kilometers"

As soon as I started to hitchhike at the Hanazono IC, a policeman saw me and ordered me to leave the area! I was too close to the toll booth which is part of the expressway.

I walked to the normal road and tried to catch cars going on the expressway, but they were going too fast to stop. Then looking at the map, I saw that Yorii Parking area may be close enough to walk to. It appeared to be about 5 kilometers and I thought maybe I could walk there in an hour. But after walking 45 minutes I saw a sign that Yorii was yet 3 kilometers further up the road! In all it took me an hour and 20 minutes to walk it. The total distance is 8.4 kilometers or 5.25 miles. I walked at a rate of 6.3 kilometers an hour or about 4 miles an hour. My shirt and undershirt was drenched with perspiration when I arrived in Yorii and so I changed to another shirt at the parking area restroom.



Dr. Suzuki who
took me to
Kamisato just
before Gunma. We
have a mutual
friend.

But the effort to get to Yorii paid off. After a relatively short wait, a man, Dr. Suzuki, picked me up and took me to Kamisato. He is a medical doctor. And it turned out we have a mutual friend, James Rudow of Sayama city!



A chemical
engineer from
Yokohama who took
me to Niigata

After another relatively short wait in Kamisato, a man from Yokohama took me to Sanjo city which is the next town to Niigata. From there a lady took me to a train station only 3 stations away from mine and I caught a train the rest of the way. Total transportation cost from Sayama: 190 yen.

[Tramatic adventure hitchhiking from](#)

Kansai



Monday, August 9, 2010: After an unsuccessful attempt to hitchhike from Suita service area in central Osaka yesterday, today I thought to make it easier on myself by taking a train to Otsu city in Shiga Prefecture, just on the other side of Kyoto. The Hankyu line is the cheapest train in Japan and it only cost 390 yen to get as far as Kyoto.



Young couple who took me from Otsu
toward Kussatsu



Young couple who went out of their
way to take me to Kussatsu
interchange

After searching more than an hour for a ride at Otsu service area, I felt the situation wasn't any better than the one yesterday. This is now Obon season during which time the Japanese like to visit their home towns. Normally I find Obon an easy time to hitchhike, but this year seemed to be different. Is it because I'm getting older?

I realized that since the completion of the Shin (new) Meishin highway that connects to the Meishin just 10 kilometers down the road, the preponderance of traffic would be taking the ShinMeshin to go to Nagoya. But I needed to continue down the older route, the one that goes to the Hokuriku junction at Maibara. I therefore thought that by leaving the expressway parking, and hitchhiking down the low road just 10 more kilometers further, I would be on the other side of the Shinmeshin entrance and more likely to catch a ride. It took me over 2 hours to hitchhike only 10 kilometers in two rides! The first ride I caught immediately from a young couple, but the second ride took me

well over an hour. Now finally at the Kussatsu interchange I had to wait yet another 1.5 hours for the next ride! I wondered if I made a mistake leaving Otsu. Now was stuck where I was at and couldn't go anywhere else. The Kussatsu interchange where I was waiting was my only hope. Just a couple days ago I told a driver that when it sometimes takes a long time to catch a ride, it always ends up in a wonderful experience meeting somebody special. Now God was really testing me to see if I really believed that statement and have patience to wait further! I started to think about retiring from hitchhiking.

Finally the most unlikely looking vehicle picked me up. It was a deliver truck with two men in the front, and the back was so full of packages I had no room to sit down anywhere. I had to squeeze between a box and the side of the truck. The men were going the direction from whence I came, toward Kyoto. The Kussatsu Service Area was just a couple minutes down the road, and I got off there.

Now my problem is figuring out how to get to the parking area on the opposite side of the expressway with traffic going the way I needed to go. I found an overpass and walked to a gate that appeared to be used for the parking area, and I saw a lady passing through the gate. I realized she must have come from the parking area, but on the other side of the gate was a sound barrier with no apparent entrance or way to get either over it or around it. I walked toward the left, found a siding door on the wall, and tried to open it. It was locked. I walked toward the right, found another sliding door, and it opened!



Mr. Mochihara who took from Shiga prefecture to Sayama city, Saitama

The parking area going toward Niigata and Tokyo is much smaller, with fewer cars, but it was my only hope. After only a few minutes, I met a man who was traveling all the way from Miyazaki in Kyushu and asked him for a ride. His name is Mr. Mochihara, he speaks English, and was friendly. This is the man who made it worth it all that suffering! Our conversation was not only pleasant, it was deep about the basic things of life. And went out of his way to take me directly to my friend's house in Sayama city, and saved me from having to hitchhike further in the heat of this hot summer.

[On the road in Osaka](#)



It took me nearly 14 hours today to hitchhike 560 kilometers to Osaka! I got stuck for a period of time at the halfway point in the city of Kanazawa. A parking attendant at Fudoji parking area on the Hokuriku expressway asked me to leave. I walked down to the regular road, hitchhiked to the next big interchange, and got back on the expressway two hours later.



Man who took me to Kanazawa in his
BMW



Mr. and Mrs. Izumi with 3 year old
daughter Chitose. They took me from
Yoneyama SA to Nadachihama after a
brief stop for shopping in Joetsu
City



Kohei and Kayo who took me from
Kanazawa to Fukui



Ken and Shigeru. They took me to
Shiga Prefecture from Fukui
Prefecture.

The highlight of this trip was to get a ride in a convertible two seater BMW sports car with the top down. Though it rained a bit when riding, the rain didn't fall on us but was blown over the car's windshield.

Adventure hitchhiking home from Ajigasawa



Route of trip from Ajigasawa to Niigata

I was invited to do some work for a hotel in the city of Ajigasawa on the northern coast of the Sea of Japan in Aomori Prefecture. The hotel people treated me like a king and served me a dinner of what the Japanese would consider to be a gourmet specialty – half of which was [biblically unclean seafood](#) which I couldn't eat! But the breakfast was fantastic, a smorgasbord type of setting from which I could choose what I liked. The hotel paid the 10,000 yen (\$90) train fare to get me there, but as usual I always opt to hitchhike as much as possible to save money getting back home. I couldn't leave Ajigasawa until 11:30AM the next day to begin my race with the sun to try to catch the last ride before dark. In the summer I have two extra hours to hitchhike, but I knew it would still be pretty tough considering the distance of 450 plus kilometers to Niigata, and most of it on a regular road.

This trip brought me one ride over the 2000th mark of the number of rides I caught hitchhiking since keeping records from Aug. 2, 2003. Since then, I've traveled 97.900 kilometers.



Scene from route
101 in Aomori
Prefecture



Couple who took me
from Ajigasawa to
Noshiro city in
Akita



Lady with her
Terrier dog who
took me just past
Akita city

After waiting over 40 minutes for the first ride, a couple picked me up and took me as far as Noshiro City in Akita Prefecture, a good distance of 100 kilometers! They even bought me lunch, a bowl of Ramen noodles.



Makoto Hasegawa

After that a lady took me about 40 kilometers toward Akita city. After her, a second lady with a cute little Terrier dog took me just past Akita city. This lady was very talkative. And it turns out that she knows a person who picked me up in 2006, Makoto Hasegawa, the captain of a professional basketball team in Niigata! She says that Mr. Hasegawa comes to visit her house from time to time because his native town is Akita and she has something to do with promoting basketball in Japan. This sport is not nearly as popular in Japan as it is in America. The average player works for a salary no better than an office worker in a regular company.

The 4th driver works for the income tax bureau. He was friendly, but not too talkative, and not very responsive to my questions about his work. But he took me with 10 minutes to spare to Sakata station from where I caught a train the rest of the way home. It was 7:30PM, already dark (no daylight savings time in Japan) and the train from Sakata City was the last one that day I could catch to avoid hitchhiking in the dark the rest of the way. I saved 2/3rds of the train fare I would have paid had I taken a train all the way.

Adventure Hitchhiking During Golden Week



children of a couple who took me to a parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway.

Trip 1: From Niigata to Osaka

Japan enjoys a string of holidays from April 29 to May 5th known as [Golden Week](#). I took advantage of this time to travel.

On May 2, 2010, I hitchhiked to Osaka from Niigata, a distance of 585 kilometers in 10 cars. Five of the cars were married couples and three of them had small children in the back seat. During holidays like Golden Week and [Obon](#) in August, I often get picked up by families visiting their hometowns. Sometimes they have the family dog with them. In the back seat of the seventh car was a beautiful three-year-old Golden Retriever named Mary.



The children's
parents

At the Amagozen parking area in Ishikawa Prefecture after waiting for an hour for a car, **I was asked to leave** by one of the parking attendants! He told me I couldn't hitchhike there. It is extremely rare for me to be asked to leave an expressway parking area, and I have no choice but to comply. It was still only a little over halfway to my destination and didn't have enough money to take a bus or train the rest of the way to Osaka.

The parking attendant told me where I could catch a bus from within the parking area. I walked halfway toward it, saw a man, and making eye contact with him, I told him I wanted to go to Osaka. He asked where in Osaka. Anywhere I said. It turned out the man was going exactly to the very parking area in Osaka I wanted to get off at, the Sakae Parking area! He is a rather well-to-do man, a company president owning 3 companies, and his wife was in the back seat. I consider it a real miracle to run into him just when I needed a ride most desperately! We had a most pleasant conversation with him and his wife who happens to be Chinese from Taiwan! This was the second time today to ride with a foreigner. The wife of the driver in the previous

vehicle is from the Philippines.

Trip 2: From Osaka to Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka



Couple with two
year old daughter
who took me from
Osaka to Kyoto

On May 5th I traveled in 4 cars 273 kilometers from Osaka to the city of Hamamatsu in the Tokkai area of Japan. [Tokkai is famous for its earthquakes](#) and occasional tsunami. It also happens to be one of the most popular areas to live in Japan due to its warm and sunny weather throughout the year. Only this year I found it *unusually cold* during my previous trip last April. Where's "[global warming](#)" when you need it? I remember the Tokkai area being warmer in mid-winter than it was last April, and that was 25 years ago!

Three of the 4 cars were families, and two had young children in the car. The first car took me to the Katsugawa Service area just before Kyoto. Sometimes I have to wait a relatively long time just to get to the other side of a large city like Kyoto, but today I caught the second ride in a matter of minutes. An older couple took me to a parking area close to Nagoya.

The last driver was a father of 3 children and a minister of the [Tenrikyo faith](#), a religion that began in the city of Tenri Japan in 1838. Tenrikyo is unusual for Japan because it is neither Buddhist nor Shinto and is a monotheistic religion, a belief in only one God. It seems to have had a lot of influence from Christian missionaries to Japan.

[More about Tenrikyo.](#)

Trip 3: Hamamatsu to Tokyo



Three young men who took me to
Fujikawa near Mt. Fuji

The next day on May 6th I needed to go to Noda city in Chiba on the eastern side of Tokyo. I also had an appointment at 7 PM to meet a man in Otemachi, the heart of Tokyo, a man from the U.K. who wrote me during this trip and expressed interest in my website!

From Hamamatsu, it only took 3 cars to go to Tokyo. The first car was going the opposite direction toward Nagoya, but I grabbed it because the Hamanako Service area is only 8 kilometers from where I was at the Hamamatsu Nishi interchange, and it is very easy to walk to the side of this particular service area to catch traffic going the opposite way.



Mt. Fuji as seen from the Fujikawa
Service Area in Shizuoka

Three young men, all younger than my own two sons took me to the Fujikawa Service area. The view of Mt. Fuji today was better than I expected it to be. Normally the best time to see it is mid-winter when the sky is clearest with fewer clouds surrounding it.

The last car was elderly two ladies, one 75 years old, who took me to Yoga in Tokyo. I got to Tokyo by 4PM, and decided to use the extra time before the 7PM appointment to meet with my friends Steven and Teiko. and helped Teiko set up her own [WordPress blog](#). (Japanese only)



Mt. Fuji as seen
from Susuno
snapped from a
moving car.

Trip 4: The return home

May 7, 2010: Japan enjoyed good weather throughout the Golden Week holiday, but today was Friday, a regular work day, and the weather turned cloudy and raining. But the rain in the Kanto area of Tokyo was light and intermittent, and I had a fold-up umbrella that I usually carry. I decided to go home today to have a couple of days of rest before work on Monday at my new job. I'm so glad I did because it took me two days to recover from this trip! When I travel I usually feel great, but upon returning home it's as if God pulled out the plug and I'm exhausted.

The first vehicle from the Miyoshi Service area near Tokyo was a truck which is unusual on the expressway. Trucks don't usually pick me up, but perhaps this one did because I asked the rider in the parking area and he asked the driver. They took me as far as Kamisato in Saitama which is next to the border of Gunma and just before the junction of the Joshi'etsu expressway that goes to Nagano. Not many cars are going to Niigata from Kamisato. Most go only as far as Takasaki or Maebashi in Gunma, and many take the Joshin'etsu toward Karuizawa and Nagano city. I could catch a ride going that way, but it's a longer roundabout way to Niigata and would get me home later. I opted to go for the road and wait for the direct route.

After about an hour a man saw my Niigata sign and offered to take me as far as Sanjo city. This was great because Niigata city is only 40 kilometers further and I could take a train from that point. The man's name was Mr. Sato and he was talkative throughout the remaining 200 kilometers of the trip.

Monday adventure from Aomori to Niigata



Mr. Kato who took
me to Kuroishi on
the Tohoku
Expressway

April 19, 2010: I had intended to hitchhike back home on Sunday morning but stayed in Aomori city in northern Honshu an extra day to deal with a friend's PC problem. Hitchhiking on a weekend or a holiday is always easier. There are more cars on the road with families traveling longer distances. Weekdays, and especially a **Monday** mean people traveling for business reasons, and they are usually not in a happy mood.

But this morning I had help to get started. Rather than walk to the highway and try to hitchhike 5 kilometers to the Aomori Chuo entrance of the Tohoku expressway, the friend with whom I stayed with offered to drive me there. This gave me a 30 minute head start. My home in Niigata is 580 kilometers distance via the Tohoku and Ban'etsu expressways and I hoped to return the same day.



The Kitayama
brothers who took
me to Hirosaki
Owani interchange.

The first driver, Mr. Kato, said he would only go as far as Kuroishi, about

20 kilometers down the road. The traffic at Kuroshi was only a tiny fraction of Aomori Chuo, and I wondered if I made a mistake taking the ride from Mr. Kato. I knew the next expressway entrance at Hirosaki Owani would be much better for me, and headed that direction on foot. I knew it was too far to walk all the way, but nevertheless I continued walking down the road until I caught the next ride nearly an hour later. Twin brothers with the family name of Kitayama picked me up! They are highly skilled carpenters who make Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. One of them said when he was young just after graduating from university, he traveled in Europe for 3 months hitchhiking from place to place. Japanese who have traveled overseas, and the ones who themselves have experienced hitchhiking will usually stop for me.



Former Sumo
wrestler, Yoshi

The most interesting person to pick me up today was Yoshi, a former Sumo wrestler. He said he lived in a Sumo world from 8 years old till 20, and all he wanted to be in life was a professional sumo. But that dream suddenly ended with an injury to his knee. The doctor told him he couldn't wrestle anymore. In despair he left Japan and moved to San Diego to start a new life. There he grew fond of the local Mexican people, and learned to speak Spanish. He also met a Japanese girl in San Diego with whom he fell in love with and expressed that love. She told him, "Yoshi, you know nothing about real love! Come to church with me tonight and learn about love." So he went with her to a Spanish speaking church in San Diego, heard the Gospel of Jesus for the first time in his life, and was so moved with [the Message](#) he wept with emotion! God came into his life that night and by and by, he felt called to become a missionary to Peru! Yoshi described to me in detail life in Peru, the poverty and the lack of morals. And I thought Japan is tough! The Japanese are hard to sell but they do have a strong sense of morals in their culture. Though they don't know the teachings of the New Testament, many Japanese live by its principles better than Westerners who do know the Bible.

Yoshi took me to the Adatara parking area just before the junction of the Ban'estu expressway that goes to Niigata. It was 4:30PM and I still had an hour and a half of sunlight left. The previous time standing at Adatara I caught a ride in only 20 minutes, but 3 hours later by 7:30 I still hadn't caught a ride and was standing in the dark unable to even read the license plates until the car was about to pass me. Over 95% of the traffic was heading toward Tokyo, not toward Niigata. I realized rather than wait for cars to come to me, I would have to walk up to drivers in the parking area, the ones that have Niigata license plates. Normally I don't do this because drivers who do give me rides this way are usually not friendly or talkative, but I was in a desperate situation! The first driver I asked did give me a ride, and I was so grateful to know I would be home in two hours and not have to try to figure out how to sleep at Adatara that night. □

Adventure returning home from Tokyo



Keiko and Tsutomu Uchiya

April 6, 2010: Today is the 11th and last day of my trip. The highlight was to meet Tsutomu and Keiko who took me from Gunma prefecture to the Miyoko parking area in Niigata. They are a married couple in their mid 40s who live in Chiba and work as hair stylists. The interchange Tsutomu and Keiko intended to exit the expressway was a convenient one for me to continue my journey from, and they opted to go a bit out of their way to take me to one that was better for me. But what ended up to be the best solution, when we stopped at Miyoko parking area, Tsutomu asked a young man with Niigata license plates if he would take me the rest of the way home, and the young man, Mr. Koike, agreed to do so! This saved both them and me time and effort.

Adventure hitchhiking from Osaka to Tokyo



Muslims praying just after sunset at Fujikawa Service area on the Tomei expressway in Shizuoka prefecture. The cherry blossoms over their heads are in full bloom.

April 3, 2010: Osaka was still cold but sunny when I arrived at the Suita Service area on the Meishin expressway at 10:30 AM. The Meishin expressway runs from Nagoya to Kobe. The first driver took me to Gozaisho on the Shin (new) meishin expressway which is just before Nagoya. He said he is 50 years old and married. Both him and his wife are afflicted with some type of mental illness and cannot hold a job. The man was friendly but his driving caused me some alarm at times because it was a bit erratic.

At Gozaisho a van with four ladies and an elderly man took me to Hamanoko Service area just before Hamamatsu. Hamanako SA is a good place to hitchhike because it is on the Tomei expressway, a direct road to Tokyo. One of the ladies is studying English and spoke it fairly well though she has never been abroad. She studies on her own only with the aid of NHK radio English classes.

After an unusually long wait of about an hour at Hamanako, a young single couple named Dai and Marika took me to the Enshutoyota parking area just past Hamamatsu, only 20 some kilometers further up the road. He would have taken me a bit further to a larger service area, but I didn't want them to go out of their way and there seemed to be enough vehicles at the parking area to easily catch a ride. But after a few minutes at the parking area, I realized most of the traffic was local and wondered if I made a mistake getting off there. I had yet another long wait for the next ride. However, I've learned from experience that the times I waited the longest often ended with the best results. God would send somebody special that would make it worth the wait.

At Enshutoyota I saw a group of young men wearing what appeared to be an Islamic type of garb. Some had beards. An hour later a van with the same men drove past me but stopped about 20 meters down the parking lot. I picked up my luggage and approached them. There were 7 in all averaging 22 years old, all

university students on a scholarship. Most were from Pakistan but at least one was from Bangladesh. I saw their van had Aomori plates and knew they would pass through Tokyo! All spoke English but would also speak either in Japanese or their own mother tongue to each other. All were friendly and seemed glad to offer me a ride.

Their names are Mustafiz, the man from Bangladesh who I sat next to, Mahatir who sat on the other side of Mustafiz, Arif the driver and another Arif, the front passenger next to him. Behind me sat Shazree, next to him Pika, and Izzul on the far window side. Mustafiz, 24, had the longest beard.

After two hours we arrived at the Fujikawa Service area. Mustafiz said they needed to stop and pray. It was 6 PM and the sun was about to set. They said I could wait in the car while they prayed, but I thought it would be wonderful to witness them praying, and asked if I could be with them. No problem they said. There was a beautiful view of Mt. Fuji and I hoped to take their photo in front of it. After prayer, they said, but by that time it was already too dark.

I was greatly impressed at the young Muslims' dedication, faithfulness and devotion to God. I asked them many questions about their life and religion. We exchanged different views and doctrines about faith, but there was no debating or arguing. I told them I never ever believed that Islamic fundamentalists had anything to do with [911](#).

[Adventure to Kansai](#)



March 27, 2010: Today is the first day of an extended hitchhiking adventure to southern Japan.

I left home at 7:30AM. The weather was unusually fair for normally-cloudy Niigata. The first stop was Kariwa, a village next to Kashiwazaki city and home to the [largest nuclear power plant in the world](#). Since a major earthquake just off shore Kariwa in the Sea of Japan, two of the 9 nuclear reactors are again producing electricity.



Nobuo and Miwako
at their wedding
party

After arriving Kariwa a little before 10AM, I spent the next two and a half hours with Nobuo and Miwako, friends who I came to know when hitchhiking four years ago.

By 12:30 the beautiful weather turned cold and cloudy with intermittent snow. I had hoped to hitchhike all the way to Otsu City just before Kyoto this day, but when a man offered me a ride to Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture instead, I grabbed the offer. I knew that Nagano would be better weather, and my appointment to meet a friend in Otsu was not till the next day on Sunday.

(To be continued!)

[Adventure Returning Home to Niigata City](#)



Mr. and Mrs. Ii who went out of their way to take me to Niigata City

March 22, 2010: It was unusually windy with a few snow flurries, and the temperature was just one degree above freezing when I left my friend's house in Aomori city at 7:30 AM to walk to the National Highway route 7. I've hitchhiked on this highway before, but this morning people seemed unusually hard and unconcerned. Nearly everybody was ignoring me and the others who didn't would shake their heads or cross their arms meaning "no!" After an hour and a half and walking several kilometers I got desperate and send an

email text message to my mate for her to pray for me.

Within only a matter of **seconds** after sending that text message requesting prayer, I noticed a car stopped about 100 meters up the road and started walking toward it. Not every stopped car necessarily means the driver is offering me a ride, but after walking a bit closer, a man got out of the car and waved me to come! It was a father with his teenage son. They took me to the Aomori Chuo Interchange which is an entrance to the Tohoku Expressway. It was only 3 kilometers further up the road, but they saved me at least another 30 minutes walking.

I had originally intended to take Route 7 back home which is the same route that I came on, but it was already 9AM and I figured perhaps the Tohoku Expressway would be faster even though I may have longer waits. The wind was strong and I began to feel cold. It was good to be wearing a heavy winter coat and woolen hat this trip.

After about an hour a man stopped and offered me a ride to Omagari City in Akita Prefecture. I rejoiced because this would take me to the Shiwa service area past Morioka which is about 200 kilometers further or over 1/3 of the way back home!

After arriving in Shiwa, I remembered that I had quite a long wait there last year during a previous trip. But this time after only 10 minutes a couple with a young son offered me a ride. They were going all the way to Chiba which meant I could go with them as far as the Adatara Service area just before the junction of the Ban'etsu expressway! This is as good as it gets, for we arrived at Adatara at 3:30PM or two hours before sunset. I needed only one more good ride!

The driver was an engineer working with lasers and fiber optic cable production. I commented to him that such technology must be extremely complex, and yet it doesn't compare with the complexity of the human cell. He smiled when he realized the conversation was leading to [creation by intelligent design](#).

The engineer was also interested in what I had to say about the fall of the American government in 1913 when [Woodrow Wilson sold the American economy to a private investor corporation](#).

At Adatara after only a 15-minute wait, a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ii from Toyama, took me the final 120 some kilometers back to Niigata. May God bless them greatly for their kindness! They had to get off the expressway to drop me off which meant it cost them another 1000 yen in toll to get back on.

Back on the road! – Adventure to Aomori, March 2010



A couple soon to be married who took me from Murakami city toward Yamagata

Princess, the Shih Tsu dog that I have been caring for since December is now with new owners. I'm now free to continue to travel Japan, meet people, share my [faith](#), and visit [Family International](#) Homes throughout the country.



Mt. Chokai as seen from
Sakata City in Yamagata
Prefecture

On February 19th I left home and arrived in Aomori city the next day. It was beautiful weather the first day. The view of Mount Chokai from Sakata City in Yamagata prefecture was outstanding! It was completely hidden by clouds the last time I passed it last November. Nine drivers, all very pleasant people, took me 270 kilometers to Akita city where I stayed overnight. There was very little waiting time between rides, and I arrived before sundown.

I expected continued fair weather but the next day was cloudy with light rain. A small fold-up umbrella I always carry with me was sufficient protection. A truck driver took me as far as Odate city which is just before Aomori. I considered this nothing short of fantastic because only 7% of the vehicles I ride in are trucks, and a truck going a good distance was just what I needed on a rainy day.

The last driver, Mr. Tooru, took me to the very door of my destination.

Second hitchhike adventure 2010



Hitomi (27) who took me back home

Princess the little Shih Tsu dog I am temporally taking care of was taken to be shampooed, and this set me free from caring for her to do other things. It's a beautiful sunny day in normally cloudy Niigata and so I just had to grab the opportunity to get out again, hitchhike and meet people.

The first driver was a man who appeared to be in his upper 60s, maybe lower 70s. He drove at least 10 kilometers out of his way to take me to a convenient location from where to continue my trip. I left him with an Activated Magazine.

Usually, older Japanese people who pick me up have traveled abroad, or have had something to do with foreigners, but the man said he has never been out of Japan. Later he said that his daughter lived in England for 6 months as an exchange student and was hosted by a British family. Ah ha! Japanese have a deep sense of obligation when helped by others, or even if any member of their family was helped, and this man's motivation was probably to return the favor. It doesn't matter to the Japanese if the foreigner in question had nothing to do with helping his daughter, any Caucasian-looking foreigner will do. □

A single lady by the name of Hitomi took me back to the area where I left my bicycle not far from home. I gave her an Activated Magazine, one that had an article exposing [Darwin's delusion](#). The Japanese, as you may know, are not very religious people. In spite of that, their culture reflects very much in many ways the teachings of Jesus such as being kind to strangers, helping those in need, etc. They hate falsehood. When I explain that Evolution is one of the falsehoods they have been fed since childhood, most of them receive it.

First hitchhike adventure of 2010



Kevin and Yuriko

Jan. 10: I had to make an emergency trip to Oyama city in Tochigi prefecture to fix a PC. Oyama city is a good 270 kilometers from home. It was snowing this morning, not a particularly good day to hitchhike! In order to save time and avoid hitchhiking during the snowfall, I took a train to a station about 30 kilometers away from where I hoped to walk to the Sakae parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. Later I found it was way too far to walk to Sakae parking, but a kind man who was going to Kashiwazaki took me to Ozumi Parking which was even better for me.



Snow piled up 3
meters next to a
service station in
Yuzawa

This winter Niigata has had 3 major snowfalls so far, about twice as much snow as was last year. The traffic moved slowly at points on Kan'etsu expressway due to the snow and following the snowplows at only 40 kilometers an hour. It promises to be a good season for the ski resorts. The mountain of snow in the photo on the left is way over my head or about 3 meters (9 ft.)

Kevin from America and his Japanese wife Yuriko took me to Komayose parking area which is just before the junction of the Kita Kanto expressway that goes east toward Oyama.

The last driver was Mohammad from Pakistan. Most Pakistanis who live in Japan are in the used car sales business, and Mohammad is no exception. He was

quite surprised that I would hitchhike, and asked me why I didn't come by train. I usually tell people it's more fun to hitchhike. Mohammad was interested to hear my views of the world, and especially about American foreign policy. I told him that it's easier for me to better understand politics and policy living outside of the U.S.A., but there are Americans living in America, albeit a small percentage (5~10%?) who have not succumbed to [mass media mind manipulation](#).

Hitchhiking stats compared



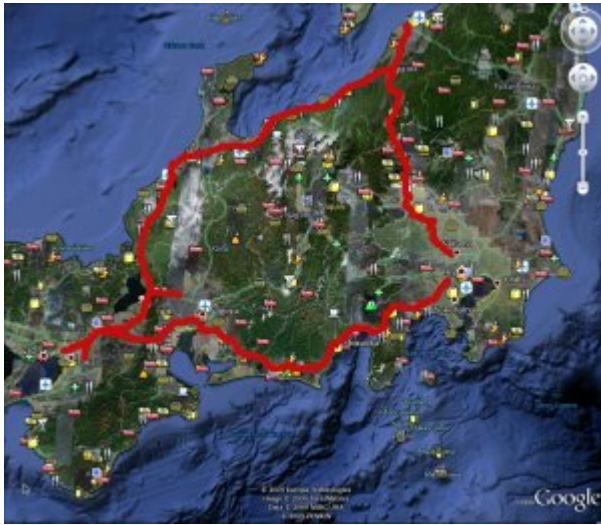
The year is almost over and I probably won't be going on the road again this month. Last night I added up the distances hitchhiked this year and they totaled to 19,530 kilometers. This is nearly 1000 more kilometers traveled compared to my previous record of 18,537 kilometers hitchhiked in 2005!



One of my goals for 2010 is to surpass the 20,000 kilometer mark.

I don't travel by hitchhiking merely for the sake of traveling. Every time I go out it's for some purpose, and often to visit friends and contacts to cure their Microsoft Windows ills. Thanks to the [inherent security holes in Windows](#) that lets in viruses, malware, and trojans, I'll never lack for a way to support myself. □ Of course, poor practices of the end user have a big part of the blame too. That's a big reason why I favor Linux. It's practically idiot proof. The user cannot hurt the system, even maliciously, without root access, and no user of my Linux machine will ever have root access, only me, the administrator.

December 2009 hitchhike adventure in central Japan



The red line shows my trip.

From November 30th to December 5th, I circled central Japan and reached my year-end goal of 90,000 kilometers distance hitchhiked from August 2003. In 16 vehicles I covered 1420 kilometers passing through Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka. This trip also broke my previous record of 2005 of kilometers traveled in one year.

An interesting person I met on the way to Tokyo was a man who lived in Iraq for 5 years during Saddam Hussein's administration and 6 months in Iran during the Shah's reign. He is a soil specialist. He was driving a dirty truck and didn't look like the scientist and specialist he turned out to be. He also surprised me with his good English. I asked him if he enjoyed his time in Iraq and he replied that he thought he would die several times! He often had to work in the desert suffering both heat and cold. He said that the mental attitude in that part of the world holds those who are robbed more evil than the robber!



Mother with daughter who
caught the H1N1 flu virus

The first car was a lady with her 12 year old daughter. I asked why they were wearing face masks and the mother replied that her daughter just caught the swine flu! At that point, I wanted to get out of the car, and especially so when she said she would take me to a train station which was a bit out of my way. But when I asked the lady to take me only up to the next major intersection, she replied that she would take me to route 8, a major highway going to the Sanjo interchange. I decided to accept her offer.

A truck driver leaning way back in the driver's seat picked me up and took me to the interchange.

In Kawasaki city I pioneered a new way to get to the Tomei Expressway: Take the Denentoshi line to Fujigaoka and walk to the Kouhoku Parking area which is only about 1.5 kilometers distance from that station.

On the way to Kouhoku, it started to rain. At first, it was only a fine drizzle and I hoped it wouldn't get worse because I had no umbrella. I walked into a shop to ask for directions and the shop lady, seeing I had no umbrella, offered me one. I was so thankful to have that umbrella later because it really started to pour when hitchhiking at Kouhoku.



Laid back trucker

Dr. Sato, a professor of medicine in Niigata University took me back home. It's always interesting for me to meet highly educated men. We always have deep conversations about life, health, relationships, politics, science, the economy, etc., etc. No matter how erudite they are, or think they are, I keep up my side of any conversation with them despite the fact I barely graduated from high school. God gave me a marvelous education as a missionary in Japan.