

2014 Winter Hitchhike Adventure to Osaka



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



On a snowy morning of January 17, after a 5 minute bike ride to the local train station where I park my bicycle and from where I walk to the highway, just a few meters away from the station my right foot slipped on the snow, hit a rock in the road, and my ankle twisted badly with excruciating pain! January 17th was to be the first long hitchhike trip this year. I was headed to Tokyo which is about 300 kilometers or 188 miles from home.

I hobbled back to the train station to inspect the damage. My ankle was visibly swollen as you see in the photo. I thought I might still be OK to travel. There was a train coming soon that would take me as far as the Hokuriku Expressway interchange. But upon further reflection and increasing pain, I decided to abort the trip. Thankfully I didn't have to limp in pain back home. I had the bicycle to ride back with.



Medical equipment consultants from Sendai. They took me from Yoneyama SA to Kureha parking area in Toyama Prefecture.

After praying for healing in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and applying a liberal amount of God's natural peppermint oil from the [Young Living Essential Oils](#) company thanks to the good advice of my friend Jonas who lives in Satama, by February 7th the ankle healed to the point I could walk without a limp again! There was no urgent need to travel to Tokyo at this time, and because my friends in Kyoto and Otsu city in the Kansai area wanted to see me, so I decided to travel to Kansai which includes Osaka and Kobe.

The first destination was Osaka, 606 kilometers or 379 miles from where I

live in Niigata City. It's only 40 some minutes drive past Kyoto. This time I hitchhiked it in 9 vehicles in 13 hours. This includes time walking from home to the local highway, and taking a short bus ride in Osaka. The total cost of transportation was 210 yen or about \$2.00 US.

It took me two rides to get to the Hokuriku expressway in Sanjo city, about 27 kilometers from home. The second car was a man in his 70s. He stopped about 100 meters up Route 8. I wasn't sure he was stopping for me but sure enough, he was! The man was on his way to Nagaoka City. He graciously took me to Sakae parking area which saved me the usual 180 yen bus fare from Sanjo where most people drop me off.

The weather was mostly fair. It snowed a little bit at Yoneyama service area. In this part of Japan sprinklers are used to melt the snow. I had to be careful where I walked not to get my feet or legs wet.

I got stuck for about an hour at Fudojo parking area just before Kanazawa. A van with 4 ladies and 2 men took me just past Kanazawa to Tokumitsu SA, a much larger service area. This is the halfway mark and it was only 2 p.m.! I knew I would make it to Osaka that day.



Driver #8: Man from Noda City who took me from Onagatani parking just before Fukui City to Shizugataka Service Area in Shiga Prefecture.

The final car, #9, was the most fun. A lady with 4 young children on her way to Kobe saw my Osaka sign and pulled over. She spoke in English and asked me what I was doing. I told her I am a missionary who shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Japanese. She asked me for an ID and I handed her my alien registration card. Normally people do not interrogate me before boarding their vehicle, but I could understand her concern seeing that the ages of her four children ranged from 14 to only 11 months old! Her name is Kanako and she became convinced I am who I say I am and told me to get in the back with her 3 younger children.

It was fun because I was able to help car for the 11 month old baby. I fed him small pieces of bread. When he began to cry Kanako asked me to sing him, "Amazing Grace". The baby stopped crying immediately! And I had a lively conversation with Kanako who lived 4 years in Kentucky studying at a university. First we spoke mostly in English but then for some reason toward the end she switched to Japanese. Was it to test me? If so, I passed.

After visiting friends in Osaka, Kyoto and Otsu city in Shiga Prefecture which is the neighboring city to Kyoto, I hitchhiked back to Niigata from Otsu Service area in only 4 vehicles.



American Sherry and Japanese
Takashi



Takashi's and Sherry's 3 legged
dog.

The drivers of car #2 who took me to Toyama Prefecture from Shiga were the most interesting. It was a Japanese / American couple, Takashi and Sherry who were on their way home. They had 3 little dogs with them, and one of the dogs only has 3 legs! It was born that way. They rescued it from an animal shelter.

I love dogs and showed her the photos of the 3 dogs I've cared for so far since living in Niigata. Sherry is from Sacramento where I used to live when an Airman stationed at McClellan AFB in 1971. I was very impressed at how well Takashi spoke English and the amount of his vocabulary. He even knows words like "oxymoron". Probably 99% of Japanese people who speak English do not know that word.

The last driver, car number 4 was on his way to Noda City in Chiba. At first he said he would take me to Nadachitanihama which is just before Joetsu City but then changed his mind and took me all the way to Ozumi Parking area just before Nagaoka.

The man is a mountain climber who climbed most of the famous mountains in Japan. He also climbed mountains in the USA, and hitchhiked with two other men from Yosemite Park in California to Yellowstone park in Wyoming. It took them four days!

It was dark when I arrived at Ozumi parking area near Nagaoka. The parking area is small and the cars few. But this parking area had a convenient highway bus stop which many parking areas do not have, and it was only 10 minutes wait till the next bus. I took it to Tsubame Sanjo. From there I walked about an hour to Higashi Sanjo station, and then took a train home. The total cost of transportation that day was 1070 yen, about \$11.00.