

Adventures in Kanto



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



Shinsaku Okuchi

From March 16th to the 19th I traveled to and around the Kanto area of central Honshu in 15 vehicles, a distance of 698 kilometers. "Kanto" literally means "Eastern Barrier" of which Tokyo is the center. Osaka is the center of "Kansai" which means "Western Barrier." There are historical reasons for these names. You historians can correct me if I'm wrong, but if I remember correctly, only those with permission from the Tokugawa government were allowed to travel.

Besides Tokyo, Kanto also holds the prefectures of Kanagawa, Saitama, Gunma, Ibaragi, Tochigi, and Chiba. This trip I hitchhiked through everyone of them except for Kanagawa.

At the Sakae Parking area from where I always get on the Hokuriku / Kanetsu expressways, I saw a young man hitchhiking on his way to Toyama. He was standing in my favorite spot! I pulled out my Tokyo sign to show him I was also intending to hitchhike. Boy, was he surprised! His name is Shinsaku Okuchi. We took photos together. He's now my Facebook friend.



The Kanetsu Expressway approaching
Yuzawa Ski Resort

I told Shinsaku that because our destinations differ, I would stand in a different place in the parking area. After about 15 minutes or so, I saw an older man walk up to Shinsaku and begin talking to him. It turned out the man was heading toward Tokyo and Shinsaku directed him to me. He man took me all the way to Kawagoe city in Saitama Prefecture, about 280 kilometers from home and only 10 kilometers away from my destination that day. From the Kawagoe IC

it was just a short walk and two stop train ride to get to Sayama city where I spent the night with a friend.



The man with his car who took me to Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture.

The next day I hitchhiked 30 more kilometers to the center of Tokyo and took trains the rest of that day to three different locations. By evening I arrived at Noda City, Chiba Prefecture, very near where I used to live from 1980 – 1982. I know the place quite well. It was convenient to live there for it's close to Route 16, the national highway which circles Tokyo.



Route 4 on the way to Oyama City

The following day I hitchhiked from Noda city to Oyama City in Tochigi Prefecture, first on Route 16 and then up Route 4 just after Kasukabe city. This route passes through parts of Saitama and Ibaragi Prefectures on the way to Oyama. It was a very windy day with dust blowing and clouding the atmosphere. A couple times gusts of wind nearly knocked me off balance! Though routes 16 and 4 are relatively much slower than traveling on an expressway, my destination was only 56 kilometers away and I was in no hurry. It took 6 vehicles to get to Oyama city. The most interesting and sweetest people I met were a young couple from Bangladesh. They are both students at Tsukuba University. The man is working on his P.H.D in computer science, and the lady her degree in business. Though they were heading in the opposite direction and preparing to travel later that day far south to Tokushima, they turned around and went out of their way taking me approximately 15 kilometers toward my destination! And not only that, after we first parted they immediately returned insisting to take me a bit further down the road! "It is our duty," the man said. I assume they were referring to Islamic teachings. Jesus also taught His followers to go the extra mile. Do most Christians follow that teaching? Those who love Jesus, do.

The Bangladeshi man seemed to be well aware of political realities. He smiled when I told him I didn't believe in the "[left right paradigm](#)" anymore. I believe instead in the [Hegelian Dialectic](#) And I believe all political events, both good and bad, are engineered.

"In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way." –Franklin D. Roosevelt



Couple from Bangladesh



Family to Oyama



The Kanetsu Expressway approaching
The Kanetsu Tunnel, the longest car
tunnel in Japan, 11 kilometers
long.



Man who took me to Echigo Kawaguchi
from Akagi Kougen in Gunma



Yuzawa Ski Resort



View from Akagi Kougen

The next day I hitchhiked back to Niigata in 6 vehicles. The final car was an off duty policeman. We talked about how low crime is in Japan compared to other countries. One reason is Japan doesn't have much of a drug problem. There are some burglaries but low compared to America or the U.K. The greatest amount of theft is bicycle theft! The culprits are often teenagers and drunken businessman on their way home after getting off the train and seeing an unlocked bicycle near the train station.



Mountains bordering Niigata and Gunma