

December 5, 2014 Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori



Truck that took me to Aomori City
from Murakami in Niigata.

I wore my warmest coat, hat and gloves for another adventure to Aomori on a cold rainy day. I stood again for more than an hour showing passing drivers my A4 paper sign that says "Tsuruoka". The place was on [Route 345](#) which runs along the now turbulent [Sea of Japan](#). For some reason there was a lot of trash on the road and sidewalk where I stood. Workers arrived to clean it up. They got closer and closer to me which caused me to walk further up the road to get out of their way.

Finally a driver stopped for me but he took me only 2 or 3 kilometers down the road. Now I was in a windy area. I used my umbrella to shield myself from the wind and intermittent rain.

About 15 minutes later I prayed, "Oh God, please send a car to take me at least to Route 7!" *Immediately* a car with a man and woman stopped for me. They were headed in the opposite direction, the direction I had just come from. "You're not going to catch a ride to Tsuruoka standing on this road!", the lady said. "Come with us and we will take you to Route 7 which has more traffic!"

I knew she was right. Route 7 runs parallel to Route 345. It connects to Route 345 about 25 kilometers from where I was standing. However the man and woman wanted to take me to a point on Route 7 which was closer, and to get there they had to go the opposite direction from my destination. There was a mountain range separating Route 7 from Route 345, and to cross it, they had to go backwards from the direction I was heading. Nevertheless, I agreed to go with them.

About 30 minutes later we arrived at a convenience store on Route 7 in the

area called Asahi. I have stood there before several times. "Look, that truck has Sapporo license plates!", said the lady. "Ask the driver to take you." And so I did. Sapporo is the largest city in the northern island of Hokkaido. I knew the driver would be going to Aomori Prefecture, and maybe even to Aomori City where I could stay even cheaper than I could if I only went as far as Hirosaki. Aomori City is a port town in the northern part of the main island of Honshu, some 400 kilometers from where I was in Asahi Town, Murakami City. Ferry boats run from Aomori City to Hakodate in Hokkaido.

The truck driver seemed surprised at my request but he graciously agreed to take me.

It is not common for a truck driver to stop for me or agree to give me a ride. Most truck companies have rules that forbid taking on passengers. They don't want to be liable to a passenger in case of an accident.

The driver's name is Hideki Watanabe. Mr. Watanabe had been driving all the way from Okayama Prefecture, an area the other side of Osaka, some 800 kilometers away. He says he makes the Okayama – Sapporo trip every week! This means if the timing is right, I can meet him in a parking area in Niigata, perhaps even as early as next week when I need to travel again.

Mr. Watanabe said there was an accident on the Expressway in Toyama which closed the road and delayed his trip. If it were not for that, I would not have met him!

Mr. Watanabe was impressed with the music I played him from my tablet PC. When I return back home to Niigata I hope to post it on this site.

I'm using the tablet now to write this post. If I don't write up an adventure as soon as it happens, I often lose interest to write it later when home. Who reads this stuff anyway? If you do, please write me some encouragement in the comments below and perhaps I'll be inspired to write more often and even the past adventures.