

Detained by the police for hitchhiking!



Sunday, April 5, 2009: A lady picked me up and told me at first she would take me to the center of Niigata City which was my destination. However, when I learned that she was on her way home, at about 2/3rds of that distance, I offered to disembark at an intersection that I thought would be convenient for me to continue to hitchhike from so that she wouldn't have to go out of her way.

However, the timing and place where I got off her car were not ideal. Just a few minutes earlier at that very intersection, there was a traffic accident. Two officers of the law were present collecting information. During the past 11 years in Japan, I have never ever been told by the police that I could not hitchhike on a normal road. It's supposed to be legal to hitchhike in Japan. I had nowhere else to hitchhike without walking a long distance of a couple kilometers, so I pulled out my sign to show the drivers and proceeded to hitchhike right in front of the faces of the two officers. They immediately stopped me. According to those two police persons (one was a woman), it is illegal to hitchhike. Jesus said to "agree with your adversary quickly" and so I didn't argue with them. I learned a long time ago that it doesn't pay to get mad at the police and so I smiled a lot, especially in the beginning. They [invited me into their patrol car](#) where they proceeded the usual routine of collecting all the information of my identity. It's a good thing I had my Alien Registration card with me or I would have been arrested. There is no [writ of habeas corpus](#) in Japan. A person may stay in jail for a few weeks for questioning even though not formally charged. [You are considered guilty of a crime until proven innocent](#) and may be badgered to sign a confession of something you did not even do! If you sign a confession of a crime of which you are innocent, it will not be overturned in a Japanese court of law and you will be convicted. (A big thank you to [Arudou Debito](#) for sharing this information!)

After the police got what they wanted (including my cell phone number!), they let me go. I promised I would look for a bus. I ended up walking about 30 minutes to get to a street from where I caught a bus the rest of the way to town. I met and talked to a young man from New Zealand on the bus, so maybe it was worth it all. I wouldn't have met him otherwise.