

Hitchhike Adventure During Golden Week 2005



This is another adventure I had on my old kt70com/~jamesjpn site which I am reposting. It occurred from April 27 to May 7, 2005.

I had two consecutive hitchhiking adventures, the first to Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo, and the second to Nagano. The total distance traveled in the 19 vehicles that picked me up was about 1750 kilometers or 1095 miles. This was during the period called “Golden Week” in Japan. Golden Week is a string of 4 national holidays which begin on April 29 and ends on May 5. Many people travel during this period to visit their parents and relatives. That makes it a relatively good time to hitchhike long distances.

The first day, Wednesday April 27, I hitchhiked to Osaka, a distance of 565 kilometers from my home in Niigata City to my friend’s home, and in only 9 hours and 40 minutes! This is exceptionally quick considering that it was on a weekday. The 4th and last vehicle, a mini van, took me 498 kilometers of the 565 kilometers or 88% of the distance. This is the furthest traveled in a single ride since I have been keeping statistics from August 2003. The driver went a bit out of his way to take me right to my friend’s house! The driver and his partner are members of the “Sokagakai” sect of Buddhism. They are not known to be friendly to other religions, and *especially* not to Christians! But they were polite. I first ask them questions about what they believe and listen to them. This obliges them to listen to me when I tell them about Jesus!



Kengo with his girlfriend.

In Osaka I saw my friend Kengo – the sponsor of my very first web site at kt70.com/~jamesjpn – and his girlfriend Aya. I first met Kengo while hitchhiking through Shizuoka in 1998. He was the person who helped me get started with web site construction back in 2001 by offering me free web hosting on his server! After sowing seeds of the Word of God in his heart

over the years, I finally had the opportunity to pray the prayer of salvation with him to receive the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart!

Osaka is next to the city of Amagasaki where [a tragic train accident](#) occurred on April 25 when 107 people died when the lead car derailed and smashed into a building.

Two days later I took the train to Kyoto and visited two friend's homes. This was the most expensive part of the trip – about \$10 to travel only 1.5 hours. People often ask me if I visited the many temples in Kyoto. I do not visit temples!! I tell them if I wanted to see a Buddhist temple – which I don't – I would take a little walk down the road from my house to see one.



The Okubo family

The photo the Okubo family who took me from Kyoto to a parking area near Gifu City. A Japanese muck raking tabloid called "Friday" published an article in that week's edition about my Christian Fellowship, [The Family International](#), and had a line about yours truly in it! It says, (my translation from Japanese) *"Hitchhike evangelism – A male believer of the group who supports the [Ainokakehashi Project](#) (a web site I made for my friends in Hiroshima) is engaged in evangelism while hitchhiking across the country. On his web site are many photos of regular people who picked him up."* Ha! While at a parking area I pointed out to Mrs. Okubo the magazine at the newsstand and told her there was a line in it about me. She said, "What?! There's something bad in it about you?" "Not at all" I replied, and I showed her the article. She understood very well that the particular magazine is a muck raking tabloid trying to make money by throwing dirt at others. The article didn't even have all the facts correct. But I felt honored that the reporters noted my web sites. The Devil may be trying to hurt my hitchhike ministry by this article, but because Friday magazine, though nationwide, is read by a relatively small percentage of the population, so far nobody who has picked me up since the article has mentioned it. None of my close Japanese friends read such a gossip rag.

After spending the night in Gifu City, I hitchhiked to Tokyo. Shigeru, an officer in the Japanese Self Defense force took me a good distance and even bought me lunch. He works as a MP. Shigeru says that unlike the US Military, there is no military court system in Japan. Serious crimes in the military are brought before civilian courts. I had a great time talking to Shigeru and shared the Gospel with him.

An Indonesian couple with two small daughters in the car took me back to Niigata from Tokyo. The husband spoke English well and was quite talkative. They are Muslims. I have no problem at all with most Muslim people I meet. Only a small percentage of Islamic people I have met have tried to argue against the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The Indonesians were very friendly. They understand very well the *real* reasons for the [war in Iraq](#). Many Japanese tell me that the war is about religion. Nothing could be further

from the truth. I try to help them see how they have been conditioned by the mass media to think so.

Trip to Nagano May 6-7

I hitchhiked to Nagano on Friday. An elderly man took me most of the way and even bought me lunch. Nearly every week I go to Chino City to perform marriage ceremonies. I get a ride to the wedding chapel, but to return home, I often walk from Chino station to the Suwa interchange, a distance of about 3 kilometers or almost 2 miles carrying all my luggage with me. But I really don't mind it. It keeps me healthy. Part of hitchhiking is not only the "hitch" but the "hike" . When I get weary of walking, I think of wealthy people who spend thousands of dollars just to scale a mountain peak while enduring all sorts of discomfort but getting nowhere. I walk not *just* for exercise, but to get somewhere!



Mrs. Yamashita and
children

On the right is a photo of Mrs. Yamashita and her children who were riding in the car that picked me up on May 7. Her husband, Masa, speaks English. He took me from Suwa IC to the Suwa parking area a few kilometers down the road. Masa has since been writing me emails asking deep questions about the reasons for war and why believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and personal savior is so important.



From Suwa a college student, Mr. Mochizuki, picked me up and took me as far as Matsushiro parking next to Nagano City.

There were not many cars at this parking area and so I opted to walk directly to the drivers and show them the sign I was holding an A4 paper sign with the name "Niigata" which was my destination. One lady in a S.U.V. saw the sign and waved her hand back and forth meaning "no!" I saw that the license plate of her car said "Nara", a city near Osaka which meant that they would be going at least part of the way to my destination. After about 20 minutes the lady walked up to me with a map saying that she and her husband would take me as far as Nadachitanihama, a parking area not far from the junction that goes to Niigata. They would be entering the junction going the opposite way from Niigata, but because the parking area is not far from the junction, and because this particular parking area has a bridge crossing to the other side with traffic going to Niigata, I happily accepted her proposal!



Satomi

Later well into the trip the couple decided they would do me a favor and take me toward the direction of Niigata from the junction. This unfortunately was not nearly as good for me as the original plan for they took me instead to the Joetsu IC. It's not as easy to catch a ride at an interchange as it is from a Parking Area, and besides that, it was already dark. So after waiting unsuccessfully for 20 minutes I decided to leave the interchange and make my way to the nearest train station and take a train the rest of the way home. It was \$40 just to travel 60 miles! I had to climb a low fence to get to the regular road. There was a gas station nearby where I asked directions. The attendees said it was too far to walk to the station and one of them, the sweet girl in the photo, Miss Satomi, gave me a lift!

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