

June 14-15 Hitchhike Adventures to Aomori and back



This trip I broke the 150,000 kilometer mark of distance traveled by hitchhiking since keeping statistics from August of 2005.

After only a few minutes wait at my usual spot near Majima Station at Murakami City, a man driving a large van stopped for me. He lives in Osaka but is originally from Okinawa. Some of my readers may not know that Okinawa used to be part of what is known as "Ryukyu Okoku" or the Kingdom of Ryukyu. The peoples of Okinawa the many islands of Ryukyu are ethnically different from the Japanese. They have their own language and culture but have accepted Japanese rule over them. The driver told me there is no such word as "pitiable" in the Okinawan language because everybody equally in Okinawa has toils and troubles in life!□

We stopped frequently along the way to take photos. The man was in no hurry to get anywhere and drove the longer scenic route along the seacoast. I worried a bit that it might take longer to go with him and considered getting off if he veered too far from the main route. But because of previous experiences waiting up to an hour for the next ride, I figured a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. We basically stayed not too far from Route 7 and though we even stopped to have lunch at a noodle shop, we arrived in Akita city around 1 p.m. Sometimes I don't get to Akita till after 2 p.m. From Murakami to Akita City is a considerable distance of 210 kilometers. That's very good for a single ride on regular roads.



The noodle shop the driver treated me to lunch.



The driver and his treat

On the way we noticed the Sea of Japan was unusually calm! I've never seen it such. On most days it's choppy and windy. It was a windless day.



The Sea of Japan near the border of Niigata and Yamagata



Couple on their way to Sapporo who
took me to Aomori City from Odate.

The 4th and last car took me from Odate City in Akita Ken all the way to my destination of Aomori city, a good 80 some kilometers. I was surprised to learn the driver, a software developer, was only 23 years old but his wife is 48! I asked her age after asking his because I couldn't see her face clearly while sitting in the back seat and had no idea she was that old! But she didn't seem to mind. Because she asked permission to take my photo when getting off I was emboldened to ask permission for theirs.

On the way back to Niigata the next day, I arrived at the Tohoku Expressway IC at Hirosaki at 12:30 p.m. which is rather late. But in only 3 rides I got as far as Adatara S.A. which is just before the Koriyama junction of the Tohoku – Banetsu expressways. The Banetsu takes me home to Niigata, about 137 kilometers away.

After a relatively short wait I caught a ride with a family on their way to Aizuwakamatsu. The husband was driving quite fast while I engaged in lively conversation with him. The distance to the junction from Adatara is only 7.3 kilometers (distance learned at the time of this post) and because of the speed we were traveling, after 5 minutes I wondered why we hadn't made the turn on the junction yet. I asked the driver but he replied, "It's 20 kilometers further up the road." I accepted his word but when after 10 more minutes we *still* hadn't made the turn on the junction I knew we had definitely missed it! It was raining hard, visibility was poorer, and the driver had his navigation turned off! He acknowledged that I was correct. We pulled off the Tohoku Expressway at the first exit and got back on at a further point the other direction. The mistake cost me at least 30 minutes of time and I got to the Bandaisan Service Area at 7:00 p.m.

It was almost dark but to get to Bandaisan at any time means a certain ride home. After a few minutes two ladies on their way home to Niigata picked me up. I told them of the mistake the previous driver made, but said that as a believer in the providence of my Creator, I know nothing happens by accident, it was all part of a [Divine Plan](#). If the driver didn't miss the junction I probably never would have met them. The ladies agreed with me.