

# Six hundred kilometer hitchhike trip home in record time



Route from Hirosaki to Niigata

I left Hirosaki in Aomori Prefecture just after 7:00 a.m. and got home in Niigata city by 2:04 p.m.! This is about as good as it gets to travel 600 km or 400 miles in only 7 hours in 5 cars with very little waiting. What's more, the folks that picked me up made the trip really fun!

It's 200 kilometers further to take the Tohoku Expressway rather than Route 7 along the Sea of Japan, but because it is all expressway with drivers going long distances, the potential to return home sooner is high.



Yoshi and Junya Kudoh. They took me from Hirosaki to Shiwa service area in Iwate Prefecture.

I arrived at the Hirosaki / Owani Interchange of the Tohoku Expressway early just before 7:00 a.m. Within minutes two men in a black car pulled up and offered me a ride. They were two brothers, Junya and Yoshi Kudo who was the driver. They past by me once, decided to picked me up, and circled back around to get me.

After getting in the car Yoshi told me they are Japanese Mafia. He said he was in prison for 4 years! I didn't ask him what he did but said I hoped he learned from the experience not to repeat the crime he committed. But Yoshi didn't seem too certain he wouldn't do what he did again.

Since keeping hitchhiking stats from August 2003, so far 6 men have claimed to be in Japanese organized crime. All were friendly and treated me with

respect. And of course you can be sure I treat them with respect! They stopped twice at parking areas to rest during which time they bought me ice creme and something to drink. They were on their way to the coast of Miyagi Prefecture to go fishing. I saw their fishing poles. The coast of Miyagi was one of the areas devastated by the tsunami of March 11, 2011.

Shiwa service area was rather desolate with only a few cars. Rather than just hold out my sign, I approached people walking and asked them their destination. After only a few minutes I met Mr. Sasaki on his way to Chiba which is just past Tokyo. He would be passing the Adatara Service area in Fukushima. When I asked him to take me to Adatara, he willingly obliged my request.

Mr. Sasaki is from a town on the Pacific coast in Iwate but he works and lives in a city in Chiba Prefecture. His job is leveling out playgrounds, school grounds and sports areas so that when it rains water doesn't collect anywhere. The ground has to be flat but slightly higher in the center to cause water to flow away. The height to width ration is so slight it's imperceptible to sight.

At the Adatara Service area I met a lady walking her two toy poodles. I bent over the pet the dogs and asked her how far she was going. She replied Koriyama City which is just past the junction of the Banetsu Expressway, the road I needed to take. I knew she wouldn't be going my way. I then complimented her about how lovely her dogs are, and walked away.



Mrs. Harumi and her two toy poodles. She went 100 kilometers out of her way to help me get back home!

A few minutes later the same lady with the dogs came up to me in her car while I was hitchhiking near the exit of the parking area that leads to the expressway. She asked me my final destination. Though I told her Niigata she nevertheless offered to take me to the Bandaisan Service area in Aizu – 100 kilometers out of her way to Koriyama!



Tomoe Okubo who took me to Niigata City from Aizu in Fukushima.

After only a few minutes wait at Bandaisan Service Area, a lady with Ishikawa license plates offered to take me to Niigata. This is on her way home to Nanao in Ishikawa. When I got in the car I saw a book that looked like a Bible. It was a Bible! The lady, Tomoe Okubo, is a Christian and her brother is a pastor. She rejoiced knowing that I am a Christian and servant of the

Lord Jesus Christ! Tomoe said that she was coming from Koriyama city where her son is attending high school. It was Sunday and she thought to go to a church in Koriyama that morning, but because her home in Ishikawa is so far, she decided to head out early. God blessed her and me both as a result of her decision not to go the church that morning!

Meeting other Christians for fellowship and worship is indeed a good thing, but organized religion today has become so corrupted that it's hard today to find a good Church to go to. I told her it mostly has to do with the pastor, what kind of man he is, that makes the church good or not. Many American churches are preaching a false prosperity Gospel! It's the *preachers* who are living in prosperity, not their poor members who give to them!