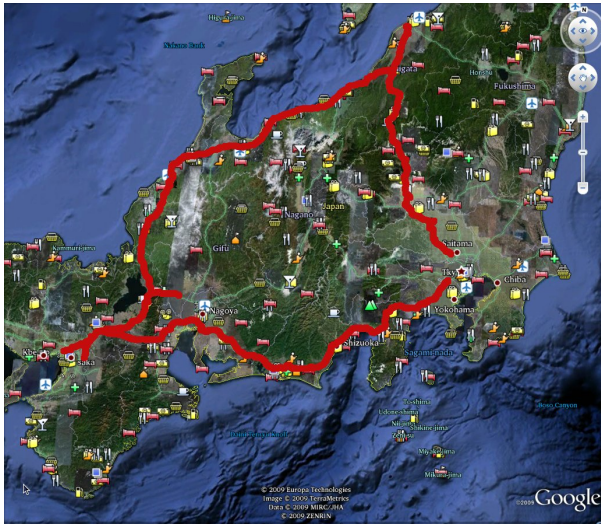


# December 2009 hitchhike adventure in central Japan



The red line shows my trip.

From November 30th to December 5th, I circled central Japan and reached my year-end goal of 90,000 kilometers distance hitchhiked from August 2003. In 16 vehicles I covered 1420 kilometers passing through Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka. This trip also broke my previous record of 2005 of kilometers traveled in one year.

An interesting person I met on the way to Tokyo was a man who lived in Iraq for 5 years during Saddam Hussein's administration and 6 months in Iran during the Shah's reign. He is a soil specialist. He was driving a dirty truck and didn't look like the scientist and specialist he turned out to be. He also surprised me with his good English. I asked him if he enjoyed his time in Iraq and he replied that he thought he would die several times! He often had to work in the desert suffering both heat and cold. He said that the mental attitude in that part of the world holds those who are robbed more evil than the robber!



Mother with daughter who  
caught the H1N1 flu virus

The first car was a lady with her 12 year old daughter. I asked why they were wearing face masks and the mother replied that her daughter just caught the swine flu! At that point, I wanted to get out of the car, and especially so when she said she would take me to a train station which was a bit out of my way. But when I asked the lady to take me only up to the next major intersection, she replied that she would take me to route 8, a major highway going to the Sanjo interchange. I decided to accept her offer.

A truck driver leaning way back in the driver's seat picked me up and took me to the interchange.

In Kawasaki city I pioneered a new way to get to the Tomei Expressway: Take the Denentoshi line to Fujigaoka and walk to the Kouhoku Parking area which is only about 1.5 kilometers distance from that station.

On the way to Kouhoku, it started to rain. At first, it was only a fine drizzle and I hoped it wouldn't get worse because I had no umbrella. I walked into a shop to ask for directions and the shop lady, seeing I had no umbrella, offered me one. I was so thankful to have that umbrella later because it really started to pour when hitchhiking at Kouhoku.



Laid back trucker

Dr. Sato, a professor of medicine in Niigata University took me back home. It's always interesting for me to meet highly educated men. We always have deep conversations about life, health, relationships, politics, science, the economy, etc., etc. No matter how erudite they are, or think they are, I keep up my side of any conversation with them despite the fact I barely graduated from high school. God gave me a marvelous education as a missionary in Japan.

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## November Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori



University professor Dr. A. Kusumi who took me to Niigata from Hirosaki city in Aomori Prefecture

Again I went to Aomori city and back, 1060 kilometers, this time in 12

vehicles which includes two trucks. The highlight of the trip was to meet A. Kusumi, a professor who teaches environmental research at a university in Nagoya. I met him at the entrance of the Tohoku Expressway near Hirosaki. His car was packed with his belongings and at first he told me there was no room for me to sit. But after rearranging his gear I was able to squeeze my feet into a small space on the floor and sit in the front passenger seat. Dr. Kusumi was on his way home to Nagoya and said he would take the expressway all the way. I rejoiced knowing this would take me all the way home because the route passes through Niigata!

Dr. Kusumi became very tired after passing Sendai and stopped frequently at parking areas to rest. My home is about half way to his destination and I suggested that he spend the night as my guest. He accepted, took me home and met the rest of my family. I was so glad to return a favor to this kind man for taking me 550 kilometers back home for free and even buying me dinner along the way. Dr. Kusumi lived in Israel and studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for 3 years. (Click on his photo to have a closer look at his sweatshirt.) You can bet we had quite a few interesting discussions. ☐

This trip took me over the 89,000 kilometer mark since I've been keeping stats from August 2003. I think I can surpass the 90,000 kilometer mark before the end of the year by making another trip. I'm planning one that will take me to Tokyo, Shizuoka and the Kyoto / Osaka / Kobe area, and this will bring me well over 90,000 kilometers.

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## [Picked up by two Nichiren ladies](#)



**November 29, 2009:** While hitchhiking to town I noticed a lady walking toward me from a distance with what appeared to be her car parked by the side of the road behind her. I correctly assumed she was going to offer me a ride. She had another lady friend with her who was the driver. They seemed a bit overly impressed to meet me which caused me to become suspicious.

I asked them, "Do you want to sell me something?"

“No!”

“Are you folks into some kind of religion?”

“No!”

They asked me if I had eaten lunch yet and invited me to a restaurant to talk. I accepted the invitation because I wasn't in any hurry and knew it would give me an opportunity to share my faith with them.

In the restaurant I offered to give them two Activated magazines. As soon as I pulled them out of my briefcase, they turned them down. The only kind of Japanese who refuses to accept literature from me are people into some type of religion, and sure enough, these two ladies turned out to be [Nichiren Buddhist](#) people, and their intent was to try to convert me!

Most Buddhists are very tolerant of other religions, and they have no problem toward Christians in general. The Nichiren sect is the **notifiable exception**. They will flatly tell you to forsake Jesus Christ and pray to their idol using their chant instead. Every time they chanted that horrible chant to me, I started to pray the “Our Father” prayer and told them that prayer works for me. To their credit, they did listen when I told them why Jesus died on the cross, and for what reason, to save all of mankind from sin.

Normally when a Japanese person invites me to a restaurant or coffee bar, they will pick up my tab. I fully expected this to happen but to my embarrassment I walked halfway out of the restaurant and was told I hadn't paid my bill yet! Next time I'll be more wary when a person seems overly interested in talking to me even though we just met. Either they want to convert you or sell you on some network marketing type of product. □

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## October Adventure to Aomori



A man who took me to Murakami City in Niigata Prefecture

**October 30, 2009:** I needed to be in Odate City in Akita Prefecture on November 1st for an appointment at 9:00 AM. Odate is the birthplace of [Hachiko, the faithful dog](#) that would come to meet his master at Shibuya Station in Tokyo when he arrived returning from work. Hachiko continued to do this every evening – even after his master died – for a period of 10 years!

Rather than stay in a hotel in Odate, I opted to stay in Aomori city with friends. Taking the 7:10 train from Aomori would get me in time for my appointment.

The first ride was a truck driver carrying a power shovel. I think this is the very first time I rode in a truck with such a heavy load. In the photo just in front of the truck you can see the two pieces of language I was carrying.



Hosaka Takayuki

I made it as far as Akita City that day in 4 vehicles.



Sachiyo who took me to Akita City

The next morning Hosaka Takayuki took me to just outside of Akita City from where I caught a ride with Sachiyo, (22) whose car was loaded with luggage. She said that she was moving from Akita back to her home town in Aomori. She saw the Akita sign that I was holding, past me once, and then turned around and offered me a ride. This kind lady even went 60 kilometers out of her way to take me to my specific destination in Akita!

Sachiyo was my audience for the next three hours while I shared stories from the Bible with her. Most Japanese know about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and they know about the great worldwide flood and Noah's ark, but they don't understand the significance of these historical events. It's always a joy for me to share God's good Word with the dear Japanese people. In Sachiyo's case she was already inclined to believe in the existence of the Great Creator and so she readily prayed with me to accept Jesus Christ as her Savior after we reached our destination.

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**[A driver's mistake helps me to get home](#)**





Asari Toru who drove me a distance of 200 kilometers

**October 25:** I'm in Aomori city and on the way back home to Niigata. Rather than go back the way I came along National Route #7, I decided to try the Tohoku expressway that runs through Sendai.

The first driver was on his way back home to Akita City after attending a Rugby match in Aomori. He offered to take me to Route 7 in Akita city. Because he would be taking the expressway a major part of the way, I knew I would make good time, but I also knew getting to Akita even as early as 1 PM would still leave me hitchhiking in the dark by the time I got to Tsuruoka in Yamagata with 150 kilometers left to go. I hoped rather that I would be able to continue on the Tohoku expressway, but I knew that the Hanawa Service Area where I needed to get off at was past the driver's exit. Amazingly the driver missed his exit and ended up taking me to the Hanawa Service area anyway!

It was a 3-hour wait at Hanawa before I caught the second ride. It's not easy on me physically to stand for three hours waiting for rides, but I knew if I could catch a good one, it would be worth the wait. A 30-year-old man, Toru, took me all the way to Miyagi Prefecture just before Sendai. He drove at a good clip which gained me some time. Toru listened intently while I shared with him the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I told him if he even only knows, understands and believes in the first 6 chapters of the book of Genesis, he'll be smarter than most of the professors of Tokyo University, the top school in Japan! And I'm not kidding when I say that.

After that, a sweet older couple from Morioka who were on the way to Yokohama took me to Adatara which is just before the Ban'etsu expressway junction that leads home. Morioka is a conservative town deep in the country, but because their daughter married a man from the U.K. and is living there now, they both felt an affinity toward foreigners.

Though I still ended up hitchhiking in the dark at the Adatara Service area, going the remaining 150 kilometers home meant just one good ride rather than several on Route 7. A chiropractor from Fukushima picked me up after a 40-minute wait and took me all the way home.

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## Adventure hitchhiking to Aomori city on Route 7



The red line shows route 7

The good Lord blessed my efforts and a man driving a truck, Mr. Kawamoto, picked me up after only a few minutes and took me all the way to the door of my destination! At first Mr. Kawamoto said he would take me to Hirosaki, about 3/4 of the way to Aomori City, but then he said if I wasn't in a hurry, he would take me to Aomori city after a brief stop over for some business in Hirosaki. I agreed to that.

Mr. Kawamoto is a very talkative man. He asked me many questions about America, where I traveled in Japan, and how I learned to speak Japanese. I gave him an [Activated Magazine](#).



Mr. Kawamoto who took me 200 kilometers from Akita City to Aomori City.

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## Adventure to Sendai



Route 49 by Lake Inawashiro, Fukushima Prefecture

**October 14, 2009:** Today I went to Sendai via the same route I took on my adventure to [Aomori via Fukushima on Sept. 17, 2009](#). I thought it would be a piece of cake considering that Sendai is only 290 kilometers or a bit less than half the distance to Aomori. This time, however, I got stuck at Aizuwakamatsu City in Fukushima for nearly a couple of hours both going to Sendai and on the way back home. In spite of that, the wonderful people I met along the way made it all worthwhile.

After walking 30 minutes from home to the main road, a young man, Hiroshi Tazawa picked me up and took me to the next town 10 kilometers further. Hiroshi encouraged me to take a bus or train, but I told him I only had about 3500 yen in my pocket (about \$40 US), not nearly enough for even a one-way trip! He responded, "Isn't it a bit reckless to travel with so little money?"

"No, not at all" I answered. "I'm a professional hitchhiker. I have more than enough money for this trip." Nevertheless, Hiroshi felt sorry for me and gave me 1000 yen out of his pocket.

I left home at noon but only made it as far as Lake Inawashiro by 6 PM. This is only 90 kilometers from home, not even half the distance to Sendai. It was already dark. After 45 minutes wait in the parking area, two businessmen pulled up and asked what I was doing. I gave the driver my business card and explained I was going to Sendai. They took me as far as Sendai station and from there I took a short train the rest of the way.

One of the men said he would never have picked me up had he been alone for security reasons. I told him that **over half** of the rides I get are from men traveling alone, **15% of the rides are from women**, and some of them are young mothers with **small children** in the back seat! The man was absolutely dumbfounded to hear that! Ironically on the return trip, 3 different women picked me up, and one was a mother with two young children in the back!



Eiji Tsukita who took me to Sendai  
on Sept. 17 and back to Fukushima  
on Oct. 16.



The most exciting part of this trip was meeting again Mr. Eiji Tsukita, the same man who took me to Sendai on Sept. 17! I was waiting for a ride at Sendai Minami interchange when he came. The first time he took me from Aizuwakamatsu to the Sugo parking area just before Sendai, and this time we met at Sendai Minami on the way back! Eiji rejoiced to see me because he said that only 4 hours after he dropped me off at Sugo, he got a job offer and is now employed again! Eiji's father said that good fortune blessed him because he was kind to me. I immediately gave the credit to God and said it was because of Jesus. Eiji told me he never picked up a hitchhiker before but when he first saw me on Sept. 17th, he went past me and then turned around feeling something in his heart that he needed to help me. I told him this was no accident, it was God speaking to him.

Eiji said over and over it was a miracle to meet up with me again. I agreed for I told him I left the area briefly to ask someone how far away the Sugo parking area is. I thought to walk there if no more than 3 kilometers distance, but when a taxi driver told me Sugo was 10 kilometers away, I turned back and waited again at the expressway entrance. Just a couple of minutes later Eiji pulled up. He took me to Koriyama city from where I hitchhiked the rest of the way home on route 49. Eiji said that he would even take me all the way home if he had time. He read the [Activated Magazine](#) I gave him the first time. I gave him my extra copy of a Japanese New Testament after I signed and dated it.



Mother with her two children who went out of her way to take me home.

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## [Race against the clock to Hirosaki city](#)



## Northern Honshu, Japan

**October 11, 2009:** I was in Mutsu City in the Shimokita peninsula in Aomori prefecture of northern Japan. As you can see on the map, the top of the red line was my starting point and the end of the line is Noheji city which was my destination. I started out 11:30AM and had to be at Noheji city by 2PM in order to catch a train to Hirosaki City in order to be there by 4:30 at the latest so I could catch a ride with a friend back to Niigata. My friend said he couldn't wait for me very long, and I certainly didn't want to inconvenience him. There is a train line running from Mutsu City but it didn't leave till after 2PM which meant I would miss the train from Noheji if I took it. My only recourse was to hitchhike along the country road that runs along the eastern coast of the Rikuoka Bay.

After walking a good 20 minutes to get to a traffic light going in the right direction, I waited about 20 more minutes for my first ride. Mr. Takatsuka took me 6 kilometers to the main road that runs to Noheji. After that a married couple took me 3 more kilometers down to the next train station. From there a young man driving a pickup truck with a fancy padded interior said he was going to Yokohama. I rejoiced thinking he meant the Yokohama near Tokyo, but it was a different Yokohama, only halfway to Noheji which is about 30 minutes further. The time was 12:45 PM. If I could catch the next ride within 10 minutes after getting off at Yokohama, I would make it.

I caught the ride only a couple of minutes after leaving the young man. They were two young ladies with a 5-year-old boy. The driver was the mother of the boy and the passenger is the driver's friend. They were going to Misawa city and would pass through Noheji. I asked them what they thought about US President Obama winning the Nobel Peace Prize but they had no strong opinion. Somehow our conversation got into the deeper things of life. We talked about the stories of the Book of Genesis, why they are true and easier to believe than the [delusions of Darwin](#), and eventually talked about the condition of Mankind and why we need a spiritual savior, [Jesus Christ](#).

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## Discussion With a Nuclear Physicist on the way to Kanazawa



A mother and daughter who went out of the way to take me to my destination.

**Oct. 3, 2009:** It rained hard during the evening and early morning, but by 9 AM the rain subsided. I needed to go to Kanazawa city in Ishikawa Prefecture for business the next day and opted to hitchhike rather than taking the bus in spite of the possibility of more rain later. I'm sure glad I did because the weather cleared up completely by noon and I met 6 interesting people whom I would not have met otherwise.

Perhaps the most interesting person to talk to was a nuclear physicist who said he worked in a laboratory in New York for two years. He was traveling with his wife to Nagano which meant I rode with them for a good 30 minutes as far as the Yoneyama service area on the Hokuriku expressway. Our conversation for the first few minutes was all in Japanese, but he started speaking English when I pointed out how Darwinian teaching has influenced at least two main branches of science, namely Geology and Biology which claims Evolution as its cornerstone.

I pointed out to the scientist how geology is based on false assumptions of the age of the earth and uses circular reasoning. The geologist says his rock is so many millions of years old because the paleontologist says the fossil found in the rock is so many millions of years old, and the paleontologist says his fossil is so many millions of years old because the geologist says the rock the fossil was taken from is so many millions of years old! This is **not science!** If an honest thinking person ponders the matter, he or she will see that evolution is based on certain assumptions, such as the old of the earth forming millions of years ago. The scientist only laughed when I told him according to the Bible the earth was created a mere 6000 years ago. I told him I'm not surprised he would laugh because he was raised under the false paradigm of Darwinism. Darwin himself didn't dream up all his teachings but borrowed much of them from others such as [Jean-Baptiste Lamarck](#) (1744-1829), [Charles Lyell](#) (1797-1875), and [Alfred Russel Wallace](#)

(1823-1913).



Two young ladies on the way to a live concert. They took me to Toyama city from Kanazawa.

I've been reading an excellent book by Ian T. Taylor entitled, "[In the minds of men – Darwin and the New World Order.](#)" I gained so much valuable knowledge from this book that exposes Darwinism, and I highly encourage everybody to read it.

From Yoneyama, a man going to [Obama City](#) took me all the way to a bus stop near Kanazawa, a good two hours further up the road. I asked him if the economy of his city is better since Barack Obama became President. He said, "Not much." The man's accent was so thick I could only understand about half of what he said. Later I learned the language of Obama city is heavily influenced by Kyoto which is near proximity. The man was friendly and bought me lunch.

The last people to pick me up were two ladies, Mrs. Tokuda and her daughter. They saw me hitchhiking in front of Nonoichi train station and offered to take me to the exact destination I needed to go (about 6 more kilometers) if only I would come with them to the doctor's office and wait while they had a check-up. I agreed because I wasn't in a hurry and I knew this would give me an opportunity to share the Message of Jesus Christ with them. The mother said her parents sent her to a Christian kindergarten and so has some knowledge of the Bible.

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## [Adventure from Aomori to Niigata via Misawa and Fukushima](#)



Yoko Kosaka

**Sept. 22, 2009:** This is a continuation of my previous post. The return to Niigata from Aomori took me via Misawa city, the location of a large USAF base close to where I visited a friend to help him with his Windows Vista PC problems. Yoko Kosaka took me on the first leg of my journey.

The next day it only took 4 cars to take me the 550 kilometers back home. I had to wait for just a little over two hours at the Adataru Service area on the Tohoku Expressway to catch the last ride. One of the reasons I had to wait so long at Adataru was because the preponderance of the traffic, over 95% of it, was heading toward Tokyo. I nearly accepted a ride from a young couple going to Tokyo, but the thought of aborting the last leg of only two hours traveling to hitchhike yet another 300 kilometers or a possible 6 more hours the next day was just so tiring, and I was tired enough already. Though it was already dark after 7 PM, I knew I was looking at only a couple more hours travel by catching a car going toward Niigata and it would be only a matter of time before I caught that ride. There were at least couple dozen cars with Niigata license plates that drove past me, but the drivers either ignored me or shook their heads no.

This season in Japan is during a special 5-day holiday which runs from Saturday to Wednesday. It was Tuesday evening and there was much traffic, so much that even the Ban'etsu expressway was jammed at certain points! A little after 7 PM an elderly couple with their 8-year-old grandson saw my Niigata sign and stopped for me. They were going exactly toward my town, and took me to a point only 5 minutes walk from the house!

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# Adventure from Niigata to Aomori via Fukushima



The Tohoku area of Northern Honshu, Japan. The red line shows my usual route to Aomori City, and the blue line shows the route I took on this trip.

The good Lord blessed my vision and faith by providing a sweet couple who took me all the way to Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima the very first ride! They didn't want to take the Ban'etsu Expressway but rather took route 49 instead. It's a beautifully scenic route that runs through a pass in the mountains along the Agano river, one of the longest and cleanest rivers in Japan. I was so thankful to get this ride because I knew I would be arriving at Aizuwakatsu around 11 AM, which means I would be making good time.

After only a couple of minutes wait at the expressway entrance in Aizuwakamatsu, a man took me to a parking area on the Tohoku expressway that was just before Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku region of Japan.



Mr. and Mrs. Abe who took me to Aomori City from just before Morioka

The last car was Mr. and Mrs. Abe with their lovely Border Collie named Hokuto. The Abes were on their way to Hokkaido, the north island, and would be spending the night in Aomori city. They took me to Aomori station from where I took a train two stations further. The total transportation cost of the 500-kilometer trip was 190 yen or about US \$2.10. I arrived at my destination around 6:30 PM. □

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## Picked up by an 85 year old driver



An 85 year old man who picked me up.

**Sept. 4, 2009:** After waiting about 15 minutes for a ride to get to a friend's house on the other side of town, an elderly gentleman offered me a ride. I didn't want to ask him his age for he looked quite up in years. Instead, I asked what he does. The man said he has been retired for 30 years from working as a railroad engine repairman from age 55. This makes him 85 years old! I think to date this is the most elderly person to offer me a ride. The man seemed very healthy, drove his small car very well, and had a sharp mind. He wasn't going to any particular destination and so offered to take me to the very door of my friend's house. I asked him what the secret of his good health is and he replied, "Don't sit at home! Get out and get into some active work involved in helping others!" This was such an encouragement to me because now that I'm 59, I've often wondered how long I can continue my adventures throughout Japan by hitchhiking. Could it be that *through* the exercise I get by hitchhiking I will prolong my years on earth? □

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## Hitchhike adventure to Noda city, Chiba Prefecture



Natsuki (22) who took me to Echigo Kawaguchi

**August 18:** On a hot summer day I traveled in four vehicles 330 kilometers to Chiba city located east of Tokyo. The last driver went out of his way to take me right to the very door of my destination!

The first vehicle was a truck carrying long steel bars. The driver, a young man, said he needed to drop the bars off at Sanjo city first and then he would take me to route 8. Eventually he took me a bit out of his way to Sakae parking area which was just perfect for me! The driver asked me since I've been hitchhiking, and I told him since I was 13. □

After a bit of waiting at Sakae parking area, 22 year old Natsuki picked me up. She said she was a bit scared at first because it was the first time to pick up a hitchhiker. I told her, \*congratulations!\* Natsuki was on her way home to Tokamachi – deep snow country in the winter. She took me to Echigo Kawaguchi which was just perfect for me.

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## The return home from Osaka



Mr. and Mrs. Itou

August 11: Today is the last day of my road trip since last July 25th. It took only 4 vehicles from the Suita Service area in Osaka to get home. Two of the drivers went way out of their way to help me!

During the 8 days I hitchhiked in this trip, I traveled 3036 kilometers in 33 vehicles. One of them was a motorcycle! (See the [August 4 post](#))

In the first car were two men from a paint company. The driver was really interested in me as a foreigner and asked many questions. I told him I painted a house once and he remarked that he heard many Americans like to do their own handyman work without hiring a contractor. They took me to a service area just before Kyoto city.

The second driver took me to Otsu Service area just past Kyoto. The third car was Mr. and Mrs. Itou, a newly married couple who run a Raman shop in Itami City in Hyogo. Mr. Itou at first said that he could take me only as far as Ryuo in Shiga Prefecture, but later changed his mind and took me to Taga just before the junction of the Hokuriku Expressway that runs along the Sea of Japan – the route home to Niigata. Mrs. Itou gave me her cell phone email address and we have been exchanging short emails.

After waiting only a few minutes in Taga, a man with Niigata license plates pulls up and offers me a ride! At first he said he would take me as far as Kashiwazaki, but later changed his mind and offered to take me all the way home – 60 kilometers further. I didn't want to trouble him and said he could drop me off at Yoneyama service area just before Kashiwazaki but the driver was insistent. I then offered a compromise and asked him to take me to a train station in Sanjo from where I would take a short train ride the rest of the way. The driver agreed to that.

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## [Hitchhike adventure from Oita City to Mount Rokkō, Kobe](#)



**August 8:** It was fine weather, a Saturday and close to the beginning of the

Obon Festival when family travel long distances to their home towns. My destination is [Mount Rokkō](#) in Kobe, a distance of over 600 kilometers. I never hitchhiked to the Kansai area in a single day from Oita, but because of the 3 positive factors in my favor, I decided to go for the gold and try it. It turned out to be as good as it gets in the life of a professional hitchhiker! It only took 4 cars with the third driver taking me to Hiroshima to meet a friend and change cars. They took me 95% of the way of the distance of this day's journey to my exact destination – the **very same** destination they themselves were going to!

The first driver was a mother with her 15 year old son, Izumi and Asuka who took me to Beppuwan Service area. They were going to Oita Airport to pick up a relative. Izumi was very pleasant and spoke some English. She encouraged her son to speak to me in English as well.

The second driver was a third generation ethnic South Korean man who took me to Nakatsu City on route 10. I asked him all sorts of questions about Japanese prejudice toward his ethnicity. Though both his parents were born in Japanese, they faced segregation when they grew up. The third generation was treated better, and the man said he even married an ethnic Japanese woman!

The man told me that in 1958 North Korea was portrayed in Japan as heaven on earth. Many ethnic North Koreans who resided in Japan decided to move to North Korea in the hopes of having a better life. Two thirds of them died within only the first 3 years, many from starvation!



Okawa Shigeo, a retired highschool principal.

After waiting only a few minutes at an intersection in Nakatsu on route 10, a retired high school principle, Mr. Okawa picked me up. At first I told him I was going to Kitakyushu, but when he told me he was going to Kobe, I rejoiced and asked if I could ride with him to Kobe. As it turned out, his ultimate destination was Mount Rokkō!

Mr. Okawa was on his way to the reunion of his college graduating class in Kobe. He said he would get off the expressway at Miyajima in Hiroshima Prefecture, meet a friend, Mr. Mizushima, and then Mr. Mizushima would take us the rest of the way in his car.

Later Mr. Okawa learned that the reunion wasn't to be held till the next day, on Sunday. He repeated over and over that it must have been God's planning to cause him to make a mistake of the date, for had he not, he never would have met me or taken me to Mount Rokkō!

After getting off the expressway in Hiroshima, because we had an hour and a half wait before Mr. Mizushima would be ready to travel, Mr. Okawa took me on a guided tour of the island of Miyajima, a 10 minute ferry ride from the mainland. Miyajima is famous for its large Shinto shrine and domesticated deer



walking the streets among the public. The deer, unlike the deer at Nara park in Nara, do not beg food from the public and will let a person touch and pet them.

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## Adventure from Kita-Kyushu to Oita City



Youji and Miki

**August 5:** I hitchhiked to Oita City down route 10, a distance of over 60 kilometers in only 3 cars!

The first driver, Mr. Kihara saw me standing outside a hospital hitchhiking and wondered if I was a disabled man who needed help! He turned around and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was hitchhiking to Oita city and he offered to take me just out of the city limits to catch cars going out of town.

Mr. Kihara is a financial adviser. I asked him what advice he has now that the economy is down. He replied, "Know your dream!"

The next driver, Mr. Sumitomo took me as far as Yukuhashi City. Mr. Sumitomo is a company owner and speaks some English. He lived in South Carolina.

The next car took me all the way to Oita station! They were 20 year old Miki and her 15 year old brother Youji. They said they are Christians and were raised in a Christian family. It's very uncommon to meet such people. Miki is a college student and was on the way to her university in Beppu which is just before Oita City. She went out of her way to take me to my destination.

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## Adventure from Fukuoka City to Kitakyushu



New friend Shizu with Mannah, daughter of Caleb and Tabita

The third driver was a lady, Mrs. Kuwahara. She has been married for 6 years but has no children. It turns out she has a problem with her husband. It's not uncommon for drivers to pour out their heart and personal problems to me. With women especially I try to listen without offering advice. I learned that women often feel better just to talk about their problems whereas a man would rather either fix the problem himself or seek advice on how to fix it from somebody he can trust.

Mrs. Kuwahara said that though she is not a Christian, she finds it interesting that anytime she is in despair, she runs into either a Catholic or a Protestant minister!

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## Adventure from Kobe to Fukuoka City





Megumi and Kohei. They went out of their way to take me to Hiroshima from Okayama

**August 2:** Today I needed to travel as far as Fukuoka City in Kyushu – a long distance of over 600 kilometers and unfamiliar territory passing through Hiroshima city which is the halfway point of this trip. Though I got off to a very slow start of less than 10 kilometers the first hour, I knew from experience my pace would get faster and faster the closer and closer I get to my destination. I started at 9:30 AM and didn't get to Hiroshima until 4:00PM which meant I averaged only 46 kilometers per hour. But the next 300 kilometers only took me 4 hours averaging 75 kilometers per hour! One driver, a young man of 26 years old, was speeding up to 150 kilometers per hour.

After waiting with no success for 40 minutes at the expressway entrance ramp in the middle of Kobe, I decided to walk further down the road to a traffic light to catch the cars when drivers wait for the light to change. I had no guarantee the driver would be going on the expressway, but because the road was heading in the direction I was going, I would have been glad to catch practically anybody.

In just a couple minutes I was offered a ride and he went on the expressway! The man, Mamoru Watanabe is a Coast Guard officer who spoke some English. I thanked him for protecting Japan from the nasty North Koreans. He took me to Kyobashi parking area in the middle of Kobe. At least now I was on an expressway, but I still had to transfer to the Sanyo expressway which would take me to the end of Honshu.

At Kibi two young men, one with a video camera approached me and asked my destination. I saw one of them was holding a large paper binder with one page saying "Hiroshima" in Japanese and realized they were also hitchhiking! They said they are working on a scientific research paper on hitchhiking. I invited them to check out this blog.

From Kibi a man who is a sales representative for a petroleum company took me to Kudamatsu Service area in Yamaguchi Prefecture. From Kudamatsu a 26 year old truck driver took me all the way to the Oji parking area just before Shimonoseki which is the end of Honshu. He said he had to get off the expressway at Tokuyama to change to another car. We made good time because he was speeding up to 150 kilometers per hour. If caught going that fast, the driver would be looking at a fine of 70,000 yen or so.

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# Adventure from Hamamatsu to Otsu City



Mr. Sawaguchi

**July 30:** After a short wait at Hamamatsu Nishi IC, Mr. Sawaguchi took me to the Miai parking area near Okazaki. He said that he picked up a Christian pastor before from Niigata!

The hardest part of this trip was to get past Nagoya. I waited two hours at the Moriyama parking area. A dozen people offered me a ride but they were only going as far as Komaki or Kasugai and I needed to get as far as the Owari-Ichinomiya service area on the Meishi Expressway. Finally one man, Mr. Saito, said that though his destination is Komaki, he would go a bit out of his way to take me to Owari-Ichinomiya!



Mr. Saito who went out of his way  
to take me to Owari-Ichinomiya

From there Mr. Ikari took me to Kusatsu service area which is only 10 minutes away from my destination of Otsu! Mr. Ikari spoke very good English. He works for a company that fast freezes food without chemicals.

After arriving at Kusatsu, within a minute I made eye contact with a man and said I wanted to go to Otsu. He immediately offered to take me!

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# Adventure from Osaka to Hamamatsu City



Miss Mai

**July 28:** Today is low atmospheric pressure throughout Japan with intermittent and sometimes very heavy rain. My destination is Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, the [city I visited on May 26th](#) this year. I'm travelling from Osaka and the distance is only a fraction of my previous trip from Niigata. Nevertheless the trip wasn't as easy as I had hoped. I had to take refuge from the rain from time to time, and I had to wait over an hour for a ride at two different parking areas on the Meishin Expressway which runs from Osaka to Nagoya.

The first vehicle was a car carrier truck. The driver took me from Suita Service Area in Osaka to Taga Service Area just before the junction that goes off to Fukui on the Sea of Japan. I was very glad to get a ride this far because it took me way past Kyoto. Normally when standing at Taga, I'm looking for rides going toward the Sea of Japan as this is the closest route on the way home to Niigata. However today I need to go in the direction of Nagoya. I figured it would be easy but it wasn't. The first hour a dozen drivers offered me a ride, but they were either going only a short distance or the wrong direction away from Nagoya.

After an hour a car stopped with two ladies who said they were travelling to Nagano! Their destination would take me to the Chuo expressway past Nagoya which heads off away from my destination. Nevertheless because I knew of the Owari-Ichinomiya Service area which just before the junction to the Chuo expressway, I asked them for a ride.

The driver's name is Eri and her passenger was her 17 year old daughter Mai. They both were glad to meet a foreigner to practice their English. Eri spoke better English than her daughter because she travelled extensively in the USA and Canada.





Man who took me from Owari-  
Ichinomiya to Moriyama

I had to wait yet another hour just to get a ride to a parking area on the Tomei Expressway which runs past Nagoya and goes to Shizuoka. Now my chances are better with more traffic heading in the direction of Hamamatsu. A man from an advertising company took me to the Moriyama parking area. Now I was sure to make it to my destination in spite of the rain!

After waiting a relatively short time, a young man, an off duty policeman named Mr. Itou took me to the Togo parking area near Toyota city. I enjoy meeting professional people and usually ask them many questions about their work.

From there a 34 year old single man named Mr. Sukanuma took me to Toyokawa train station from where I took a short train ride the rest of the way. He works in the automobile manufacturing business which is now in a major slump. Mr. Sukanuma asked me to buy a car, but I told him I prefer catching rides with others. □