

# 2013 Golden Week Hitchhike Adventure to Aomori



The Tohoku area of Northern Honshu, Japan. The red light shows my usual route to Aomori City, and the blue line shows the route I took back via the Tohoku and Banetsu Expressways. It is 130 kilometers longer than the Sea of Japan route, but potentially faster.

From April 27th to April 29th I hitchhiked 986 kilometers in 12 vehicles From Niigata to Aomori Prefecture and back. (See map) This time is the beginning of what is called "Golden Week" in Japan, a string of holidays which includes Emperor Showa's birthday.

It rained hard the night before I left but by morning, the rain had stopped in Niigata. I caught an immediate ride at my starting point on Route 345 near Majima station, the first car that came! The driver took me to Tsuruoka City in Yamagata Prefecture, a good 1.5 hour distance of about 100 kilometers. It was raining heavily when I arrived and so I sought for shelter at a store for some 30 minutes. The rain subsided by then but there were strong gusts of wind. My umbrella strained against it but survived.

The second car also came very quickly, a man who took me to Sakata City about 20 kilometers up the road. He offered me a can of coffee to drink but I politely declined. I explained to him that I quit all caffeine intake only 4 days before. I shared with him the physiological and psychological harm caffeine does to my body, things I read from "Caffeine Blues."

The final car that day was a mother and her one and a half year old daughter.



Mr. and Mrs. Kamimoto who took me  
from Iwate to Fukushima

The longest ride on the way back was from Iwatesan Service Area in Iwate Prefecture just before Morioka City to Adatara in Fukushima, 310 kilometers. The driver, Mr. Kamimoto and his wife were one of the sweetest couples as well. They treated me to lunch at Kunimi Service Area in Fukushima Prefecture. It turns out Mr. Kamimoto served some 34 years in the Japanese Self Defense Force! I knew from my own military experience as an Airman in the USAF that he must have rose fairly high in rank to be in the military so long, and I learned he retired as a Lt. General! I think Mr. Kamimoto must be the highest ranking officer who ever befriended me. I've only known colonels before.

The Kamimotos took me to Adatara SA which is just before the Banetsu Expressway junction. From experience I know this is the hardest point to catch a ride toward my destination of Niigata. Nearly all of the traffic is heading south toward Tokyo. However today, I got an immediate ride! A high school science teacher and his elderly mother saw my sign and stopped for me. I asked him if he believes in evolution. "Of course!", the teacher replied. I explained why I reject it as false science. They took me to Bandaisan Service Area. At that point a good percentage of the traffic is going to Niigata.



Mr. and Mrs. Satoh who took me to  
Niigata City

The final ride to Niigata City was a couple from the Unification Church, Mr. and Mrs. Satoh. He's also a nuclear power plant engineer at the power plant at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, the largest nuclear power plant in the world. We talked about his job for a while, and then he switched to biblical doctrinal matters. For some reason, these dear people do not think that Jesus' death on the Cross of Calvary was necessary or good! They think that Jesus failed! I told them Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, and His blood shed on the cross cleans us from all sin.

Colossians 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his

cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

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## Adventures in Kanto



Shinsaku Okuchi

From March 16th to the 19th I traveled to and around the Kanto area of central Honshu in 15 vehicles, a distance of 698 kilometers. “Kanto” literally means “Eastern Barrier” of which Tokyo is the center. Osaka is the center of “Kansai” which means “Western Barrier.” There are historical reasons for these names. You historians can correct me if I’m wrong, but if I remember correctly, only those with permission from the Tokugawa government were allowed to travel.

Besides Tokyo, Kanto also holds the prefectures of Kanagawa, Saitama, Gunma, Ibaragi, Tochigi, and Chiba. This trip I hitchhiked through everyone of them except for Kanagawa.

At the Sakae Parking area from where I always get on the Hokuriku / Kanetsu expressways, I saw a young man hitchhiking on his way to Toyama. He was standing in my favorite spot! I pulled out my Tokyo sign to show him I was also intending to hitchhike. Boy, was he surprised! His name is Shinsaku Okuchi. We took photos together. He’s now my Facebook friend.



The Kanetsu Expressway approaching  
Yuzawa Ski Resort

I told Shinsaku that because our destinations differ, I would stand in a different place in the parking area. After about 15 minutes or so, I saw an older man walk up to Shinsaku and begin talking to him. It turned out the man was heading toward Tokyo and Shinsaku directed him to me. He man took me all the way to Kawagoe city in Saitama Prefecture, about 280 kilometers from home and only 10 kilometers away from my destination that day. From the Kawagoe IC it was just a short walk and two stop train ride to get to Sayama city where I spent the night with a friend.



The man with his car who took me to Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture.

The next day I hitchhiked 30 more kilometers to the center of Tokyo and took trains the rest of that day to three different locations. By evening I arrived at Noda City, Chiba Prefecture, very near where I used to live from 1980 – 1982. I know the place quite well. It was convenient to live there for it's close to Route 16, the national highway which circles Tokyo.



Route 4 on the way to Oyama City

The following day I hitchhiked from Noda city to Oyama City in Tochigi Prefecture, first on Route 16 and then up Route 4 just after Kasukabe city. This route passes through parts of Saitama and Ibaragi Prefectures on the way to Oyama. It was a very windy day with dust blowing and clouding the atmosphere. A couple times gusts of wind nearly knocked me off balance! Though routes 16 and 4 are relatively much slower than traveling on an expressway, my destination was only 56 kilometers away and I was in no hurry. It took 6 vehicles to get to Oyama city. The most interesting and sweetest people I met were a young couple from Bangladesh. They are both students at Tsukuba University. The man is working on his P.H.D in computer science, and the lady her degree in business. Though they were heading in the opposite direction and preparing to travel later that day far south to Tokushima, they turned around and went out of their way taking me approximately 15 kilometers toward my destination! And not only that, after we first parted they immediately returned insisting to take me a bit further down the road! "It is our duty," the man said. I assume they were referring to Islamic teachings. Jesus also taught His followers to go the extra mile. Do most Christians follow that teaching? Those who love Jesus, do.

The Bangladeshi man seemed to be well aware of political realities. He smiled when I told him I didn't believe in the "[left right paradigm](#)" anymore. I believe instead in the [Hegelian Dialectic](#) And I believe all political events, both good and bad, are engineered.

"In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way." –Franklin D. Roosevelt



Couple from Bangladesh



Family to Oyama



The Kanetsu Expressway approaching  
The Kanetsu Tunnel, the longest car  
tunnel in Japan, 11 kilometers  
long.



Man who took me to Echigo Kawaguchi  
from Akagi Kougen in Gunma



Yuzawa Ski Resort



View from Akagi Kougen

The next day I hitchhiked back to Niigata in 6 vehicles. The final car was an off duty policeman. We talked about how low crime is in Japan compared to other countries. One reason is Japan doesn't have much of a drug problem. There are some burglaries but low compared to America or the U.K. The greatest amount of theft is bicycle theft! The culprits are often teenagers and drunken businessman on their way home after getting off the train and seeing an unlocked bicycle near the train station.



Mountains bordering Niigata and Gunma

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# First all day hitchhike adventure of 2013



Route to Osaka from Niigata. Click on map to see an enlargement

On February 22nd, I hitchhiked from Niigata to Osaka, the first all day hitchhiking trip this year. My destination of Osaka is 600 kilometers from home. I wanted to get a good start and arrive early, so I took a train and a highway bus to take me as far as Ozumi Parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. It was snowing and just above freezing. I wished I could have left the day before when it was bright and sunny.

After only a few minutes wait, a lady stopped and said she could take me as far as Yoneyama SA, a larger parking area on the expressway. She called herself brave for picking up a stranger for the first time.



Truck driver who took me from Yoneyama SA in Niigata to Amagozen in Fukui



The truck that took me to Fukui

At Yoneyama I had to wait 2 hours for the next ride! It continued to snow. In this part of Japan because temperatures do not get below freezing in the daytime, water sprinklers are used to melt the snow. This is fine for cars but people walking through it tend to get their shoes wet and their legs sprayed with water if they don't watch carefully where they are walking!

After about an hour and a half, a man who I recognized to be a truck driver walked past me, I showed him my Osaka sign but he shook his head and said he's not going to Osaka, but Himeji in Hyogo ken. From where I stood Himeji is past Osaka but his intended route would not take him through Osaka but further north and then west of it. However I knew he could take me at least 200 plus kilometers on my way before his direction changed. It was only matter if he was willing or not. I asked him if he could take me at least part way but the truck driver walked off into the rest room without replying.

I hoped he would return to where I was standing but he didn't. About 30 minutes later I spied a truck and walked up to see the license plate. It was the same truck driver I saw and he motioned for me to get in the truck! The driver was very friendly and talkative and so the time went by quickly. He took me to Amagozen Parking Area in Fukui. It was only 2'30 p.m. and the sun was shinning with no snow. I was now in excellent shape!



Mr. Yokoyama who took met o  
Kanda parking area in Shiga  
Prefecture.

The wait in Amagozen for the next ride was quite short, only a few minutes. The driver, Mr. Yokoyama is a company president and a fluent English speaker which is quite unusually. It turned out he lived in London for a couple years, and then Helsinki Finland for a couple more. Mr. Yokoyama was on his way home to Gifu, the opposite way from Osaka on the Meishin Expressway, but his route took me Kanda parking area, a point in Shiga ken just before the expressway junction to the Meishin. From there at least half of the traffic would be going my direction to Osaka. At Kanda PA Mr. Yokoyama took me to the cafe and treated me to coffee before departing.



Hydrogen gas truck that took me to  
Osaka

Immediately after Mr. Yokoyama left, a man walked past me and I showed him my Osaka sigh. He agreed to take me to Suita SA in Osaka, the exact place I needed to go! It was a tanker truck, and the tank was filled with compressed hydrogen gas! "If we have an accident could the tank explode?" I asked the driver. "Yes" he replied. "This company has a strict safety policy. They check if there is any alcohol content in my blood not only before I start, but also when I return the truck to the company."

From Suita it was just a short bus ride and a 15 minute walk to get to my friend's place. I arrived at 6:30 p.m. 11.5 hours after leaving home. Not bad. The last time I didn't arrive till after 11 p.m.!





Mikiko and her daughter Asako. They rescued me from cold and windy Tokumitsu Service area while on my way back home to Niigata

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## Year 2012 Hitchhike Distance Chart



The chart shows the distance travelled by hitch hiking in Japan from 2005 to 2012.

The final trip of the year was to Tokyo on December 26, an unusually cold day with icy streets. It took twice as long as normal to get to the Sakae Parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway, and 3 hours to catch the next ride! I was about to quit when an elementary school teacher from Murakami city came and rescued me.



As you can see, year 2012, was slightly lower than 2010. The distances are in kilometers.

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
18537	11150	7487	12185	19530	15795	17558	15710

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## November 2012 Adventure to Aomori





Today was cloudy when I started out on my journey to Aomori city, 470 kilometers from home. I wore for the first time this season a warm overcoat. I heard it had been snowing in Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of Honshu.



Mr. Toki who previously picked me up twice.

At 8:05 a.m. after walking 25 minutes on Route 345 from Majime station, the first car of the day stopped for me. It was again Mr. Toki, a cook who picked me up twice previously!. This time I remembered to take his photo. I'll very likely see him again because he drives to work daily on that road usually the same time in the morning when I hitchhike to Aomori Prefecture.



Lady who took me to Atsumi Onsen

The next car was a lady who had picked me once before this year! That's twice in a row meeting people who had previously picked me up. She's a fish merchant who makes daily trips to Murakami City. It's highly likely to meet her again as well. She took me to Route 7 which is the main road going to Aomori Prefecture.

After that I walked about an hour passing through 3 tunnels further up Route 7 to seek a better spot to hitchhike. At Iwasaki a lady stopped for me. She saw my sign that says, "Atsumi Onsen" and was going there. I thought she was in her 20s but she told me she has a 14 year old daughter!



Coast of Iwasaki, Niigata Prefecture on the Sea of Japan. Notice the hole in the rock which was created by erosion from the ocean.



Truck that took me to Odate City,  
Akita Prefecture

Atsumi Onsen has a large "*michi no eki*" which in English means "road station", a place where cars and trucks stop to rest. I've stood there many times. Usually from Atsumi Onsen the next vehicle will take me to Tsuruoka City, about 30 kilometers further up Route 7, but this time a truck driver from Maizuru City in Kyoto Prefecture took me all the way to Odate city in AKita! He was going to Aomori Prefecture, but a different area, Mutsu City in the Shimokita peninsula, and therefore wouldn't be passing Aomori city. Though it was only 4:45 p.m. when arriving Odate city, it was already dark. And because it was also raining, I took a train the rest of the way to Aomori City.



Rainbow Bridge in Aomori City.

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## Autumn Adventure to Saitama



Mother with 2 year old daughter who  
took me from Echigo Kawaguchi in  
Niigata to AkagiKogen in Gunma

It was fine weather when I started out from Niigata City at 10 a.m. My destination was Sayama City in Saitama Prefecture which is just to the north of Tokyo. The distance from home is about 280 kilometers, only half of the 560 kilometers to Osaka which I hitchhiked the previous week. I thought it

would be piece of cake not only because the distance to travel was much less, but because it was a Saturday. Weekends are always easier to hitchhike. People are often traveling either to or from their home towns which means they are going further than they would be on a workday. Normally it gets easier and easier to catch rides the closer I get to my destination. Today was different!

The first driver was an architect who designs homes and buildings. I asked him if he thought that the collapse at near free fall of the World Trade Center buildings was caused by burning jet fuel melting the steel girders. "No way!" he replied. "It was done by an explosive called Termite." I said, "Do you mean Super Termite or Nano-Termite?" The man was surprised I knew of those words. He said that termite is unknowingly being used in building construction. He said Termite's chemical reaction with a combination of steel and aluminum is powerful.

The second driver was a lady, a young mother with her two young daughters, Chika (6) and Mei (3). It's so uncommon for me to be picked up with little kids in the car without the father or an adult man present. Out of 2550 vehicles since keeping records from August of 2003, the total number so far is 45 cars which is 1.67% of the total, a number higher than I thought it would be. I wanted to take their photos but she said no when I said I wanted to post it on the Internet!

The third driver, a man by the name of Hidetoshi, said he just came from Fukushima only 25 kilometers away from the damaged nuclear powerplant. His job is to restore a fossil fuel power plant not far from the damaged nuclear plant. Hedetoshi said he likes America and its freedoms. I told him my experience of getting thrown in jail for 3 hours for passing out Gospel literature on the street at a western suburb of Chicago.

The 4th car was another mother with her child! It is possibly a first ever experience to be picked up by two mothers with little children in a single day! Ladies who pick me up are 15% of the drivers. Drivers with little children in the car are about 6% of the total number of vehicles but the father is usually present. Mothers with little children without their husbands present are possibly less than 0.01% of the total number of cars. The mother in the photo on this post has an older daughter who is 20 years old, just married and is herself about to have a baby! This is a gap of 18 years between bearing children. I asked the mother if she purposely wanted to have a 2nd child after raising one to adulthood, and she said yes! God bless her.

Her home in Fukushima near the border of Ibaragi was destroyed by the March 11, 2011 earthquake which forced her to move. She took me to Akagikogen in Gunman.

After waiting some 30 minutes at the Akagikogen service area, a highway patrol car pulled up and 4 men got out and questioned me. These guys are no police but have the power to ask me to leave. They are often followed up by police.

This time I was able to talk my way out of getting kicked out of the expressway service area! The last time I was stopped like this, they called the cops and I was escorted to a town from where I was told to catch a bus. But today I asked them if I could stand near the restroom area and ask drivers directly for a ride. After about 10 minutes of waiting and further negotiation, they got the OK from their boss. They made me promise not to step out into the street, a promise I kept.

After another 30 minutes a man offered to take me to the Takasaka service area in Saitama Prefecture. This is just short of where I wanted to get off the Kan'etsu expressway in Kawagoe! His highschool son was in the car and I spoke to him in English, something the father appreciated.

It was after 5 p.m. and dark when I arrived in Takasaka. The service area was crowded with people and cars, but everybody seemed to be in a busy mood. From experience I knew I was in a bad situation. When the service area is too crowded, nobody seems to care about the lone hitchhiker. And because it was dark, it made the situation even worse. I knew there had to be a train line within walking distance from the service area. After 20 minutes of vain efforts asking drivers for rides, I opted to leave the service area out the back way and walked the regular road toward the distant lights of a town toward the east. I knew the train line was in that direction. This paid off and in 30 minutes I arrived at the Kita Sakado train station! From there it was only 570 yen to get to Sayama city.

God is good.

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## [Tribulated trip to Osaka](#)



Kana and Rami (the driver) who took me from Kusatsu to Toga in Shiga Prefecture.

It's been about half a year since visiting the Kansai area of Japan. "Kansai" literally means, "Western Barrier" and consists of three main cities, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe. You might ask, "Is there an Eastern Barrier? Yes, there is. It's called the Kanto plain with Tokyo being the main city. "Kanto" literally means "Eastern Barrier." This all has to do with Japanese history from the Samurai times of 500 years ago.



Torhu, a university student, who took me from Osaka to Kyoto

Japan is divided into political regions called *ken* in Japanese or Prefecture in English. Prefectures are similar to states of the USA or provinces in Canada. There are 5 prefectures between Niigata Prefecture and Osaka spanning a distance of 500 kilometers or 315 miles.

Thanks to expressways that go that entire distance, it's actually easier for me to make in all the way to Osaka from Niigata in one day, a distance approximately 100 kilometers further than hitchhiking to Aomori city. Now with 2 hours less daylight than in the summer, I often cannot catch the final car before dark and have to take a train the rest of the way.

I left home at 7:00 a.m. took a train to Sanjo city (25 kilometers from home), and got to the Sakae Parking Area on the Hokuriku Expressway around 8:30 a.m. It was a warm and bright sunny day. Three cars took me to the Tokumitsu Parking area just past Kanazawa, about the half way point arriving just after 3:00 p.m. But the weather had changed and it was raining heavily! I stopped for lunch hoping the rain would subside, but it didn't. Even though I had an umbrella, I knew from experience standing near the parking area exit where cars would re-enter the expressway in the middle of the rain would get me nowhere. Drivers have rarely stopped for me in such a case. I stood under a covered area next to the parking area and walked out holding a sign that said either "Fukui" (the next Prefecture" or "Osaka" depending which way I turned the sign. Many of the vehicles had Fukui plates but everyone I asked turned me down.



Two men who took me from Kyoto to Kusatsu Service Area in Shiga

Though I stood under the covering most of the time, my legs and left arm got wet from the rain. An hour and a half past and it began to get dark. If I was going to Aomori city, I would have stopped hitchhiking at this time and opted for the train. But in Ishikawa prefecture, I had no such recourse. I was nowhere near a train station.

I was in a desperate situation but remembering that I've been in worse gave

me comfort. I prayed asking God to supply my needs – the need of a driver going to Osaka! It wasn't absolutely imperative that I arrive to my destination that evening, but I was facing an uncomfortable night if I didn't. There is no long bench to sleep on at the Tokumitsu Parking area like there was at Adatara in Fukushima Prefecture. (another story).

It gets dark early in the Japan in Autumn, Rather than stand in the parking area under heavy rain, I stood next to the entrance of the parking area's restroom and showed my A4 paper sign to all which said "Fukui" the next Prefecture on the way to Osaka. After many rejections, at 5:55 p.m. an man said,

"I'm going to Osaka, not Fukui." I turned my plastic case of A4 signs around, showed him the Osaka sign and replied, "Osaka! Yes, I want to go to Osaka! Would you take me please?"

He replied, "Sure, just wait where you are now till I have some dinner."

I replied as he left toward the restaurant in the parking area, "Don't forsake me!"

The man is a truck driver and true to his word, he took me to Osaka, and quite close to my actual destination! Because of the rain, waiting for rides and the fact the truck driver got off the expressway at Tsuruga and took the regular road along the western shore of Lake Biwa to Kyoto and Osaka, the entire trip took 16 hours.

In contrast the return trip to Niigata on Sunday took only half the time, about 8.5 hours. It was sunny weather and a weekend. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays are always better for me when hitchhiking. People on their day off are more likely to pick me up than those going to work or back. There was little waiting time. An elderly couple took me from Shizugatake in Shiga Prefecture to Nadachihama in Niigata, a good 300 kilometer distance! And I made 3 new Facebook friends!

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## [Two Adventures through Northeast Japan](#)



Having fun hitchhiking in northern Japan, making new friends, and saving a bucket of cash.

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## Treated to an Oyster snack



Getting treated to an oyster snack on my 400-mile hitchhike adventure in Northern Japan.

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## Rescued by two Muslim men from Pakistan on a rainy day





Shirasawa Station in Akita  
Prefecture near Odate City.

**July 16, 2012:** The previous day I sprained my back while on the road in Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture. This morning when rising at 5:20 a.m. from the bed in the capsule hotel where I spent the night, an excruciating lower back pain greeted me. It was difficult to stand up and walk. To make matters worse, though I expected the weather to be fair and sunny, a low pressure front reached Aomori causing heavy precipitation from time to time. Nevertheless my goal was to return home to Niigata, and to hitchhike as much of the distance I could.

After checking out of the hotel at 6 a.m. I walked 30 minutes slowly to the train station pushing my luggage with wheels while putting some of my weight on it with one hand in an attempt to alleviate back pain while holding an umbrella in my other hand. The rain was constant but not too heavy. At Hirosaki Station I bought a 320 yen ticket to Nagamine station as I usually do and caught the 6:51 a.m. train. Hopefully the rain would stop upon arrival at Nagamine 25 minutes later. Because it did not, I not to get off at Nagamine but go as far as Shirasawa Station which is just before Odate City and on the other side of the mountains on the border of Akita and Aomori Prefecture. From experience I knew the weather may be different on the opposite side of the mountains. It was not. The rain was even heavier. Rather than go further and spend more money for the train, I got off at Shirasawa hoping and praying for a change in weather. The tiny Shirasawa station was only 20 or meters away from Route 7, a place to flee back to in case of a downpour. Because the station is small, it is unmanned to save the railroad operating costs. Only large train stations in Japan have a staff. There were no passengers waiting for trains. I laid down on the bench in the station waiting room trying to relieve back pain, but the bench was hard and uncomfortable. It was not a place I could rest.

I walked to Route 7 and began to hitchhike. Though today was a Monday, it was the end of a three day holiday with traffic from prefectures as far as Mie which is past Nagoya. I saw several cars with Niigata license plates.

The rain constantly changed from a light drizzle to torrents. After fleeing several times from the road back to the train station for refuge, I found a building next to the road with an overhanging roof just large enough to protect me and my luggage from the rain. There I stood holding my umbrella for the next two hours while sticking out my thumb to on coming traffic. Though much of the traffic was local, there were plenty of cars going long distances of 200 or more kilometers. None stopped for me and my lower back continued to hurt. It rained hard with thunder and lightening from time to time. For some reason the Japanese mentality changes on rainy days. They become more reluctant to stop for me. Normally I wouldn't wait much longer than 30 minutes on the same road had it been bright and sunny.

Around 10:45 a.m the rain completely stopped and the sky got a bit brighter. I now had a slot of time to hitchhike sans the umbrella! I knew it would probably not last very long.

At 11:00 a.m. a car with two men with middle eastern looking faces stopped and the driver asked me in Japanese where I wanted to go. They said they could take me to Odate City, only a few kilometers further. Normally I wouldn't accept such a short ride, but I wanted to make some progress no matter how small. The two men are in their 30s, both from Pakistan. I guessed correctly they are used car dealers. Almost everybody from Pakistan who lives in Japan is. The passenger asked me my age. He said I look very weak for somebody who is 62 years old! He knows an American who is 80 who looks better than I do! I replied I happen to be in constant pain from a strained muscle in my lower back from yesterday. The man sheepishly smiled which meant to me he excepted my reason for looking "weak."

Though the men at first offered to take me only as far as Odate City, they said they could take me as far as Noshiro City, 60 kilometers up the road, if I didn't mind waiting from time to time as they visited certain locations along the way that related to their business. "That's fine" I replied. I was in no hurry. It started to rain hard again and I was thankful to be with them out of the rain and resting my back sitting down in the back seat of their comfortable vehicle.

For the first several minutes I conversed with the Pakistani men was all in Japanese. I called my wife on my cell phone telling her I finally caught a ride, I ended the called with an "I love you too." The passenger in front responded, "I love you three!" It turned out both the driver and his friend understood and spoke English! They were just testing my Japanese ability. This is not always true for Pakistani people. Most do not speak English with me.

We switched to talking in English. I asked them many questions about their country and told them what I believe to be true about certain current events in the middle east.

I told them that:

- al-Qaeda is a CIA creation in the *imagination* of the public. It *doesn't* exist as an organization at all.

- Osama Bin Laden had probably died a long time ago, maybe even before the end of 2001. He was not the man the U.S. Military said they killed in Pakistan on May 2, 2011.

The driver smiled with surprise that I, an American, would know such things! He agreed with me on both counts. This is exactly what many Pakistanis already believe. They know that al-Qaeda does not exist as an organized group. And they doubt that it was Osama Bin Laden who was killed in Pakistan for the simple reason the U.S. military did not show a body!

We agreed together that there are wealthy people seeking to exploit the public by creating problems where no problems exist. Freemason Albert Pike said that World War 3 would be a clash of cultures, Islamic fundamentalists against the Zionists. Islamic people certainly have a bad image in the West, but this image is not the same that I see when meeting them face to face! They are not the fearful "terrorist" types the media portrays them out to be. Both men were very friendly. They called themselves Muslims but said they were not very "good" ones because they don't always pray 5 times a day. It struck me that they would use the adjective "good" because this reminded me of Roman Catholics, some who are called a "good Catholic" and some who are not so good.

The passenger then started to talk about his faith in Allah and obeying Allah's laws. He said killing is not part of Islam, and that especially includes suicide bombers! I told him that Islamic suicide bombers have giving Islam a very bad press in the West. He agreed but said these people are really not part of true Islam. It could be that these suicide bombers are part of the CIA mind controlled MKULTRA project and their purpose is to cause trouble where there would be no trouble.

The passenger continued to share his pure and simple faith in Allah. I asked him what he thought of Jesus Christ. He replied that Jesus, who he called "Isa" is a Messenger from Allah like Mohammad was, but that Isa was not Allah's Son. "But did you know that Jesus' mother Mary was a virgin when she conceived him? I replied. "Jesus therefore didn't have an earthly father, but a Heavenly one!" "Allah can do anything!" the Muslim man responded. "He's the Creator and does what He wants. It doesn't mean Isa was His son!" I saw they have a set answer for Christians. I don't argue with them, I just give them facts from the Bible in a loving way.

My opinion of Muslims: Their faith is simple and pure. They call Allah the Creator and believe all things were designed and created. They do not hold the pseudo-science doctrines of Darwinism and Evolution. And they call Allah a God of Love. The Muslim man said it was because of Allah's love he and his friend gave me a lift. In my book Allah is the same as the God of Love I worship. I don't care if some people claim that Allah is really the moon god. They call Allah almighty and the Creator. They are still yet only ignorant of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the sin of mankind on the cross, but they do acknowledge the doctrine of sin and that all humans are sinners.

The next time you hear or read anti-Muslim bashing material, you might do well to question the source and motivation of the author. Though I've never

lived in an Islamic country, I've met many Muslims in Japan and Russia and can tell you they are not the image that the media portrays them to be.

The Pakistani men took me to Noshiro train station, a good 50 kilometers from Shirazawa. I thanked them profusely and we warmly shook hands when parting.

I took a train the rest of the way home. While on the train I continued reading my Bible from where I left off at Ezekiel chapter four and was impressed with verse

14: "Then said I, **Ah Lord GOD!**..." (emphasis on Ah Lo) After hearing the Muslim man say the name Allah so many times, it strikes me that the first 4 letters of "Ah Lord God" sound so similar! Could this be where the name Allah came from?

After I returned home, using the [Theophilus Bible program](#) on my PC, I did a search for the phrase. "Ah Lord God" and found it occurs exactly 10 times in the KJV, and only in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both prophets! Interesting, don't you think?

I also learned today that burping causes pain in my lower back muscles but sneezing does not. ☐

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## Last week of June adventure to Hirosaki and back



Mr. and Mrs. Kikuchi who took me to Tsuruoka City from Kisagata, Akita Prefecture

**June 29 – July 1, 2012:** This weekend I went to Hirosaki and back in only 12 cars traveling 768 kilometers.

The trip to Hirosaki was the fastest ever! It took only 4 cars with an average waiting time of only 9 minutes.wait between cars. I arrived at 3:00pm.

On the return trip, a man took me from Noshiro city to Honjo. Rather than take me to Route 7, he said my chances of getting a ride on the expressway going further south might be better. I agreed with him, but after waiting some 30 minutes at the expressway entrance with cars whizzing past me with no place to stop, I began to think Route 7 was better after all. But it was too far to walk to.



Father with his 13 year old  
daughter who took me to Nikaho  
City, Akita Prefecture

A man with his 13 year old daughter saw me and pulled up in a parking lot next to the expressway entrance. He offered to take me to Route 7. He also didn't think my chances to get a car going on the expressway were very good. The man likes to study English and showed me he knows the difference between an R and and L sound. This is quite a feat for most Japanese! They cannot tell the difference between words like "pray" and "play" or "glass" and "grass." This man could. He encouraged his daughter to speak English with me but she said no. She was too shy as many young Japanese people are. Fear of embarrassment may be the main reason why the Japanese are not so good at learning a second language. I did get her to say a few words, however.

The man and his daughter went out of their way for me and took me much further than they first promised, all the way to Nikaho which is the end of the free expressway in Akita Prefecture. He said it was no problem because they would take the expressway back to Honjo.

It turned out my waiting for a ride at Honjo IC was not in vain. A man who saw me standing at the Honjo expressway entrance saw me again at Nikaho! He knew somebody must have picked me up so he decided to do so as well and took me to Kizarazu. And at Kizarazu, a young newly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Kikuchi, who also saw me standing at Honjo IC stopped for me! They took me all the way to Tsuruoka, the city on the other side of Sakata! Mrs. Kikuchi seemed so happy. She was always smiling. They had been married only 2 months.

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## Third June Hitchhike Adventure to

# Hirosaki



On a bridge in Tsuruoka. Mt. Chokai can be seen in the background.

It's now my 4rd trip to Hirosaki this month! The first one was with a friend who drove all the way, the rest by hitchhiking. I still have one more trip on the 29th of the month!

Today was supposed to rain but it turned out sunny. The train to Majima was 25 minutes late which meant I started hitchhiking at 8 a.m. Rather than walk up Route 7 as I did in the past, I opted to stay stationary. After a 25 minute wait, a 70 year former seaman who sailed the world took me a distance of about 5 minutes drive.

About 15 minutes later a man I apparently met when hitchhiking the same route last winter stopped for me! The man works at Hajima Kensetsu Co, a very talkative man who told me many things of the area. Rather than the main route of Route 7, the man took the coastal route which went more directly to his destination. I wound up in the center of Tsuruoka city. It's not a big town and I knew Route 7 had to be within walking distance. It was: A good hour hike!

Though it took me nearly 60 minutes to get to another place I could hitchhike, after arriving at the point the next ride came only 5 minutes later, Mr. Shirase whose hobby is mountain climbing. He once found on the side of Mt. Chokai the body of a man who had died within the hour. The man apparently fell. The police officials he notified said the area was not their territory and told him to contact other officials. This ticked off Mr. Shirase! He scolded them. "I'm supporting you people through my taxes, and you mean to say you won't go a bit out of your way to perform your duties?"

Mr. Shirase took me to Nikaho in Akita Prefecture. I told him that the traffic light in Niikaho City would be fine, but he insisted to take me further to a place he thought would be better for me. Often drivers make

suggestions to drop me off at places that I know from experience will not be good for me. I'll suggestion an alternative but when they still insist, I will yield because I don't want to cause them any trouble. He did say, however, that if I didn't the area he would take me back to the city and its traffic signal.



Mr. Murata playing the Shakuhachi

Mr. Shirase's suggested dropping point turned out to be not agreeable for me to hitchhike, but because it was close to the expressway entrance, I opted to get off there anyway. I'm so glad I did because after only a few minutes wait, 2 cars simultaneously stopped for me! The first car was a lady. When she saw the second car stop just a few meters from her, she asked the passengers if they were willing to take me. They did, Mr. and Mrs. Murata, a very friendly couple who invited me to their home to drink tea! Mr. Murata's hobby in making and playing a unique Japanese musical instrument called the Shakuhachi. You can see the video I took of them in the previous post. Mrs. Murata plays the Koto, a stringed instrument.

After spending about an hour with the Murata family, they took me to the Kotooka Highway rest area on Route 7, a good distance the way to the next city of Noshiro. It's now 3:50 p.m. Rather than wait at the rest area, I walked along Route 7, often walking backways and holding out my sign to on coming traffic. The shoulder of the road was getting narrower and I had to stop walking at a point. A few minutes after 4 p.m. An older couple who were on their way home to Noshiro city stopped for me. The man said he would take me to Fatatsui after dropping his wife off at their home.

After only a few minutes wait at Futatsui, a young man playing a Simon and Garfunkel song stopped. He was only going a few kilometers up the road.

I waited a considerable amount of time, at least 30 minutes at an intersection in Fatsui. It began to rain. Everybody was ignoring my sign paper that said "Odate", the next city about 40 kilometers further. After perhaps a 40 minute wait a young man who took pity on me stopped. He lives in Fatatsui and wasn't on his way in the direction I needed to go, but nevertheless out of the kindness of his heart he took me to Takanosu, about 2/3 of the way to Odate!

When we arrived at Takanosu, it had stopped raining. I walked a few meters further up the road and only a minute or so later a young man on his way to Odate stopped for me. He took me exactly where I wanted to go, a place on the opposite side of Odate on the way to Hirosaki.

The time is now 6:30 and only half an hour before sunset. I walked a couple kilometers further up the road. A man in a Mercedes Benz costing 20,000,000 yen (about \$250,000 US) stopped. His name is Mr. S (name withheld), a second generation Koran man who was born in Japan. He once had many businesses and income to the point he could afford to hire a personal chauffeur. He said he



lost much of it, millions of dollars due to the sub-prime loan crises. Mr. S saw my Aomori sign and because he was on his way to Aomori City, he stopped for me. But I told him I only needed to go as far as Hirosaki, 40 kilometers before Aomori City. Mr. S took extra time to take me not only to Hirosaki, but to the very hotel I would be staying that evening! I suspected the reason Mr. S. Was so wealthy was because he had something to do with the Yakuza. He knew all the businesses in Hirosaki and even their former owners!

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## June 16th Adventure from Hirosaki back Home



Mari and Kurumi who took me to Odate City

I began my journey home later than usual, first a train from Hirosaki station at 11:25 a.m to Nagamine, 3 stops out of town, arriving 10 minutes later. This puts me right on Route 7, a good place to hitchhike.

After a relatively short wait of 19 minutes, a car with two 18 year old girls stopped and offered to take me to Odate City. Their names are Mari, and Kurumi, the driver. They attend a local junior college studying to become kindergarten teachers. Kurumi received her driver's license only 3 months previous in last March.

I waited for the next car at the Route 7 Odate by-pass entrance. Twenty seven minutes later around 1 p.m. a driver pulled up and offered to take me to Omagari, now called Daizen City which is a bit south of Akita City. Daizen City is somewhat out of my way and far from Route 7, but because it is a distance of 200 kilometers or about half of the way back to Niigata, I considered it a "bird in the hand" type of situation. I knew there was a road that went from Daizen city to Route 7. Last year a Vietnamese truck driver

took me to Daizen, which was *very much* out of my way at the time. But in this case considering where I was standing, I didn't think it was all that much out of the way home. However, what happened later convinced me never to accept a ride from a driver going that route again!

The road the man took was Route 105. For him it was the shortest way to Daizen City. Route 105 passes through the mountains. There were few traffic lights and the scenery was picturesque. But it became narrow and winding at a point. The guard rail on the right hand side of the road bordering the edge of the mountain was all banged up from cars that hit it! This probably happens mostly in the winter when the road is icy. There was hardly any length of that guard rail that was not dented up! Some sections of the rail were in very bad shape indicating a vehicle had hit it going at a considerable speed.

We arrived at Daizen City at 4 p.m. three hours later. I knew no matter what at least I wouldn't be passing through Akita City from that point. Akita City is often difficult to cross.

It began to rain lightly. I took out my folding umbrella and held it while pulling my luggage with wheels behind me.

After walking some 30 minutes up the road, a lady pulled over and asked where I wanted to go. I told her Route 7. She looked at me as if I was talking about some place on the other side of the country! The preponderance of the traffic was *not* going to Route 7 at all. Most drivers were on their way to Yokote City, further out of my way. Though I was walking in the right direction toward Route 7, I found later there was a major junction further up the road, and most of the traffic turned toward the left going east to Yokote, not the western direction toward the Sea of Japan that I needed to go.

I didn't have a paper said "Honjo" so I sat down, pulled out a blank A4 sheet of paper, and wrote □□ and tried to make the lines of the characters as thick as I could to make it easily visible to drivers. After waling some 70 minutes and passing the junction that goes to Yokote, a car that had just passed me turned around and came back for me, two young men. They were friendly but listening to some awful heavy metal music, a Japanese band that imitated KISS. It sounded like souls screaming in torment in hell! In fact, the word Hell was the name of one of the numbers. I sat in the back seat with my fingers in my ears trying to block out the noise.

Honjo was much further away then I remembered, a good hour drive from Daizen. No wonder the lady who stopped earlier didn't want to take me there. In the future I will not consider the "via Daizen route" a viable option.

The two men took me to Ugo Honjo Sation from where I took a train the rest of the way home. It was getting dark and still raining, and I was in time for the very last possible train. I arrived home 30 minutes past midnight.

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## June 15 Adventure from Niigata to Hirosaki



The scene of Route 7 near Majima station. The sign says Majima Bridge.

June 15, 2012: The day is bright and sunny with thin and wispy cirrus clouds. Again as I did the previous week, I started off from Majima station on Route 345 at 7:35 AM. This time I didn't catch the first ride till 8:25, about 50 minutes later. The driver was a cook on his way to work at a restaurant in Sasagarenagare, a spa and resort area in northern Niigata. His name is Mr. Toki., a very friendly man who was constantly smiling. It may be redundant to call him "friendly" for all who voluntary stop for me are friendly.

The only drivers who are sometimes not friendly nor talkative are the ones who reluctantly picked me because I approached them when they were parked and asked them to. For this reason, unless I'm absolutely desperate for a ride, I don't like to approach drivers sitting in their car. Most of them will only say no. The ones who do say yes are still sometimes reluctant and fearful. I would rather they come to me out of their own volition and offer me a ride. One lady who I approached actually scolded me for not taking the train! It doesn't make for a pleasant journey to have to deal with people like that.

Sasagarenagare is a 15 minute drive from Majima on lonely Route 345 with few cars. I had hoped to get a ride as far as the junction of Route 7 from where there would be more traffic going north. I walked about a 100 meters further up the road to the end of the shop and hotel area. About 40 minutes later at 9:30 a.m, a car that had just passed turned around and came back for me. The driver's name is Teru and he was on his way to Hokkaido!

Teru has been spending his retirement years traveling and camping around Japan. Though his home is in Amagasaki next to Osaka, he knows the Tohoku and Hokkaido regions very well. He goes from camp ground to camp ground. In the day he rides around the area on a folding bicycle which he carries easily in

the back of his car. I suggested to Teru for him to take a free stretch of the expressway to save time, but he was no hurry to go anywhere. Teru preferred to take the slower but scenic coastal road. He took me all the way to Akita city, a good distance of nearly 200 kilometers from Sasagarenagare! In spite of a relatively show start out of Niigata, this ride more than made up for it. I arrived Akita City at 12:30 p.m.



Maiko

At Akita City, I arranged to meet a lady who had picked me up last year, July 29. Her name is Maiko and she's a nurse care who cares for the elderly. I have friends in Akita and encouraged her to visit them. We had lunch together. After about an hour, Maiko took me to a spot on Route 7 near where she first met me. I didn't want Maiko to go too far out of her way for me. The spot where she dropped me off was heavily congested with mostly city traffic.

I had to wait 2 whole hours for the next ride! The next town of Noshiro was 50 kilometers away. Everybody ignored my sign that said "Noshiro". Finally I put it away and just stuck out my thumb. It was about 4 p.m when the next car stopped: Two men on their way to Noshiro! They took the expressway and went a bit out of their way to take me to Futatsui on Route 7 just past Noshiro.



Children walking home from school/

The next major city is Odate, about 40 kilometers further, and it was now around 5 p.m. After waiting only a minute, a man driving a rather expensive looking car saw my Odate sign and stopped. He was an interesting man, a watch retailer, whose hobby is collecting Rolex watches! He has a 40 year old daughter who is still single, a high school teacher. He said his daughter doesn't want to marry because she saw the way he treated her mother, the "teishu-kanpaku" style, meaning, the MAN is the absolute lord over the house and he expects his wife to fulfill his every whim and desire! I don't think his daughter needs to fear such treatment in marriage because the younger generation of Japanese men are not inclined to treat their wives so bossy and discourteously as their father's generation did.



Setting sun over Mr. Iwaki near  
Hirosaki. Mt. Iwaki is an inactive  
volcano.

It was after 6 p.m when I arrived in Odate. I walked a bit up Route 7. The next major city is Hirosaki and my destination, about 40 kilometers further.

A young man stopped, a dentist by the name of Shuho. He's from Saitama but is now living in Hirakawa next to Hirosaki. Shuho graciously went a bit further for me to take me to Hirosaki Station. From there the hotel where I spent the night was only a 20 minute walk away.

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## June 10 Adventure Hitchhiking from Hirosaki to Niigata



Mr. and Mrs. Sakura in their living room

**Sunday, June 10, 2012:** I hitchhiked 404 kilometers (253 miles) from Aomori Prefecture to Niigata City in 9 cars. They consisted of 4 married couples, two small children, 4 single men, 2 ladies and one single couple. A highlight of this trip was visiting Mr. and Mrs. Sakurada's home in Noshiro. They picked me up when hitchhiking exactly one month before on May 6 during my previous trip back to Niigata. I also made 3 new Facebook friends.

I left the capsule hotel in Hirosaki bright and early to catch the 6:51 a.m train, the first one going to Akita Prefecture. The fare to Nagamine, 24 minutes and 3 stations down the line, was only 320 yen. Nagamine is next to Route 7, the highway toward home.

The sky was overcast and there was a light precipitation. I opened the small folding umbrella I often carry with me. Traffic on the road was sparse. Around 7:35 a.m. a middle aged couple stopped for me. They saw my Odate sign and turned around. Their destination was Odate but decided take me all the way to Higashi Noshiro, an extra distance of 80 kilometers round trip out of their way!

I sent a SMS text message to Mr. Sakurada just before I arrived, and he replied he would be waiting for me at the convenience store near the Higashi Noshiro exit of the expressway. I arrived a few minutes before him.



One of the riceburgers I had for lunch.

Mr. and Mrs. Sakuada were great hosts. They gave me a good breakfast of fish and rice balls with salad, and a lunch bag for my trip: Two rice-burgers! In the 34 some years I've lived in Japan, today was a first time ever for me to even see a rice-burger! They were delicious!

I spent about an hour at the Sakurada home. During that time a lady friend of theirs visited, a true Bible believing and Bible reading Christian who attends a small church in Noshiro. The population of Japan is said to be 1% Christian, but I would say Bible readers are probably much less, only two or three out of a thousand. Her name is Mikiko and she became my Facebook friend!



Mikiko

Mr. & Mrs Sakurada offered to take me to Akita City, 50 kilometers from Noshiro, just as they did before when I first met them. But because they had no business in Akita City that day, I didn't want to be a burden to them. I told them that the expressway entrance of Higashi Noshiro which is only a few minutes drive from their home would be fine. The time was now about 10:30 a.m.

At 11:05 a.m. a young man named Yusuke stopped for me and took me to Akita City. Yusuke is a software developer. He wanted to drop me off at the train station, but because it was a good hour drive from Noshiro and because the train would be leaving an hour later at 12:10, there wasn't quite enough time to catch it. If I had caught that train, I would have taken it 3 stops down the line to get out of town and back to Route 7. The next train was 2 hours later, too long to wait. Yusuke therefore took me to Route 7 at the point it leaves Akita City going toward Yamagata, the way to Niigata.

Though it was *not supposed* to rain in Akita that day, it did, a constant but light precipitation. I wasn't in a very good location to hitchhike. The traffic was heavy but going quite fast. I walked up the road for at least an hour in the rain holding my umbrella and pulling my luggage behind me (it has wheels). I hoped to find an intersection with a good traffic light, but there was none. I was now in a desolate area in country.

A middle age lady took pity on me and stopped. She told me she would take me to a nearby train station. I declined her offer because she wasn't going very far. Twenty or so more minutes later it began to rain harder and I still hadn't caught a ride. I regretted not accepting the lady's offer. After walking further up the road to what I thought was an intersection, I saw it was actually an overpass going over a crossroad. The shoulder of the road became narrower which made it even harder for drivers to stop. I turned around and walked back the way I had just came to where the shoulder was

wider. I stopped walking and started praying while holding out my thumb, smiling and facing traffic.



Route 7 in Akita close to the Yamagata border. Mt. Chokai is in the background.

The rain continued. About 10 minutes later another lady stopped. She was going as far as Michikawa station, about 20 kilometers up the road. Progress! When we arrived at Michikawa, the rain had stopped. There was a traffic light with a push button to turn the signal red for pedestrians to cross the road. I pushed the button every time a group of cars approached me to stop the traffic. This way I get a good look at the drivers faces and see if anyone will make eye contact with me. The first person who does usually offers me a ride. It also gives the drivers more time to check me out and decide whether they want to pick me up.



Another view of Route 7 close to Yamagata

After a few minutes a middle age married couple stopped and took me to Sakata city. The husband said his ancestors are samurai. Samurai families often have records of their family tree of hundreds of years. He knew some interesting facts of history of the area, things you won't find in a school history textbook.

The stretch of Route 7 from Kisagata to Sakata passes by Mt. Chokai which sits on the boarder between Akita Prefecture and Yamagata Prefecture. The Daimyo (feudal lords who were vassals of the Shogun) of Akita and the Daimyo of Tsuruoka quarreled over which prefecture would lay claim to Mt. Chokai's summit. They took their dispute to the Tokugawa government in Tokyo. Because the Tsuruoka Daimyo was richer than the Akita Daimyo, the Tokugawa government awarded the summit to the Tsuruoka Daimyo. He was lord over the Shonai area of Yamagata Prefecture. One of the officials of the Akita Daimyo took responsibility for the failure to gain Mt. Chokai's summit for Akita, and committed seppuku, also known as hara-kiri.



Keita, my new Facebook friend.

The couple took me to the other side of Sakata from where there would be more traffic to Tsuruoka, the next big town about 30 kilometers away. Three young men averaging 26 years old saw my sign and stopped for me. They are in a



network marketing business called Amway. One of them became my Facebook friend!



Mr. and Mrs. Hayasaka with their  
son Ryodai

The three young men dropped me off at an intersection on the Route 7 bypass. The city traffic was heavy with few cars going very far. I walked further up the road hoping to get to a better intersection. After a few minutes, Mr. And Mrs. Hayasaka with their young son, Ryodai, stopped for me. They took me to the very edge of Tsuruoka proper, a few kilometers further up the road. The husband asked me when I hoped to returned home. "Of course, sometime this evening!" I replied. He gave me an incredulous look indicating he didn't think I would make it. It surprised me thought so considering the distance I had already come that day, 250 kilometers with only around 150 kilometers remaining. With 2 hours of summer sunlight remaining I considered it a piece of cake!



One of the tunnels of the Nihonkai  
Tohoku Expressway. The purpose of  
the blue lighting on the ceiling  
may be an attempt to keep the  
driver alert.

I walked further up the road. After only a few minutes a lady stopped and offered me a ride as far as Sanze, half way to Atsumi Onsen. She took the brand new stretch of the Nihonkai Tohoku, a section of the expressway that is still toll free.



The single couple who took me to  
Sanze

From Sanze on Route 7 I had to wait at least 30 minutes for the next ride. It was a young single couple who saw my Atsumi Onsen sign. The car was a station wagon with two seats in the front but none in the back. I sat down on the floor next to the back door.



Atsumi Onsen

The couple didn't go quite as far as I had hoped they would go. The end of

the Nihonkai Tohoku expressway was yet a couple kilometers up the road, walking distance. I knew there would be more traffic from that point going further. It was now around 6 pm, an hour before dusk. The sky was blue with fleecy clouds, and the low sun illuminated the scenery in golden hues. I walked about 20 minutes.



## Atsumi Onsen

Just before arriving to the access point of the Nihonkai Tohoku expressway, a car coming from the way I just walked stopped about half a football field distance up the road. It was a young married couple with their 5 year old daughter. They were headed home to Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture, not far from Nagoya. This was the final ride for me that day. Their route would pass directly through Niigata City! Toyota City is 580 kilometers from the point the family picked me up. It would take them 7 more hours to get home arriving round 2 a.m.!

The husband is from Tsuruoka and was visiting his parents. It was now about 6:30 p.m. He offered to take me to Niigata station from where I could catch a short train ride home, but rather than have them get off the expressway which would delay their journey by at least a half hour, I asked them to let me off at the Toyosaka Service area just inside Niigata city. Another stretch of the yet unfinished Nihonkai Tohoku expressway began at Murakami, about 70 kilometers from Niigata city. I knew the expressway ran close to and parallel with the Shinhaku train line. I wasn't sure what the closest train station was, but knew it had to be in walking distance from Toyosaka SA.

It was close to 8 p.m when we arrived Toyosaka SA. The sun had completely set. My eyesight has weakened the past year, and it's especially harder for me to see in low light conditions. The Toyosaka service area was more like a small parking area with no concession stands and only a restroom. I knew there had to be an access road to it leading to a city street, but the exit to the access road was not apparent. I walked in one direction and then another only to see the expressway on one side and dense forage on the other. I went to a lighted area in the restroom and studied the highway map, The map didn't give me enough detail to determine a direction. I then used the map / position locator feature of my cell phone. It helped me several times before when I wound up in an unknown area. Sure enough, the cell phone map showed roads leading to the service area! With renewed confidence, I walked a new direction, one toward a lighted area and saw the exit of the service area. It lead to a city road. But because it was dark, I still didn't have my bearings and was unsure of the direction to the train station. Again I pulled out the cell phone, determined my location, and walked a hundred meters in the direction I thought might be correct. I stopped and again checked my location. The map clearly showed me I had walked away from the station. I turned around and within 15 minutes found the train station. From there it was only a few hundred yen fare to home. I arrived around 9:30 p.m.

That evening I accessed my Facebook account and wrote to my 3 new Facebook friends that I had returned home safely. Mr. Hayasaka replied: "Wow, you really made it back Sunday evening as you said you would. Congratulations!" I've been in far worst situations than today and still was able to arrive to my destination thanks to the help of my "Higher Power." His name is Yeshua Hamashiach, AKA Jesus of Nazareth.

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## Summer Adventure Hitchhiking to Aomori City



Route 345 from Majima with my luggage in the foreground.

**On June 8, 2012:** I hitchhiked 402 kilometers from Majima Station in Murakami, Niigata Prefecture, to Aomori City. The drivers consisted of one elderly couple, two recently married young men, a man about my age driving a large truck carrying tons of rice, a car with 3 ladies and a man, and finally, a middle age lady who took me to the very door of my destination.

Hitchhiking from Niigata to Aomori in the summer is much easier than in the winter. I'm always in a race with the sun to catch the last ride before dark. In the summer I have 2 extra hours to work with. In the winter I often can only hitchhike as far as Odate city in Akita, 100 kilometers short of the goal.

I began hitchhiking on Route 345 which runs along the coast of the Sea of Japan. It's a rather desolate area with not much traffic. However the drivers are usually going at least 20 or more kilometers.



The first driver who picked me up.  
The background is Nezumigaseki in  
northern Niigata on the coast of  
the Sea of Japan.

After only a few minutes the first car stopped, an elderly couple. They took me as far as Nesumigasaki, an area with many scenic views. I thought to walk from there to a large parking area at Atsumi Onsen, a popular spa visited by many tourists. But after seeing a road sign that said Atsumi Onsen is 10 kilometers further up the road, I quit walking. I had already walked about 3 kilometers.



Motomu who took me to Akita City.

After only a few minutes after I stopped walking, a young man named Motomu who works at Kanshiwazaki Nuclear Power plant picked me up and took me all the way to Akita City, 170 kilometers further or 42% of the way toward my goal! Motomu was on his way back to his home town to visit his parents. Soon his company will transfer him to an oil rig on a small island near Australia. I asked him if his job was dangerous, "Yes," he replied. But at least he'll be able to take his wife with him.

Motomu dropped me off at Route 7 in the center of Akita city. The traffic there was very heavy. Holding out a paper sign showing the town of my destination is ineffective in such a situation. I found it's best just to hold out a thumb and hope for a curious driver to stop and ask me where I want to go. I'm happy just to get a ride to the edge of town from where drivers will be going longer distances.



Two of the ladies in the car that  
took me to Oiwake just north of  
Akita City.

In only a few minutes a car with 4 elderly people pulled up, 3 ladies and a man. They found it strange to see a foreigner hitchhiking. It was their first time ever to pick up a hitchhiker. They took me to the Oiwake, outside of Akita city.

From Oiwake, a newly wed young man took me to Odate City, about 90 kilometers further. It was only 2:45 p.m. when we arrived!



The truck driver and his rig that

took me to Aomori City.

I stood close to a Lawson's convenience store on Route 7 and held out a sign that says, "Aomori." To my surprise, a large truck stopped! It's quite rare for such a big rig to pull over to the side of the road for me. The driver said he would take me to Hirosaki city, but ended up going further than I expected and went to the Aomori city Route 7 bypass! It was now 5 p.m.

I continued to walk further up Route 7. I was now in actual walking distance to my goal! But it was still pretty far and would have taken me 3 more hours had I walked it. The final driver was a lady who went out of her way a few kilometers to take me to the very door of my friend's house.

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## Hitchhike Adventure from Hamamatsu City back to Niigata



Yusuke and Noriko, the first people to pick me up.

**Sunday, May 20, 2012:** Today was the last day of my trip and my return to home. The challenge was to hitchhike 600 kilometers (about 400 miles), the same distance I traveled on day one of my journey, but this time I would be crossing Tokyo. It's not easy to cross Tokyo by hitchhiking, I usually take the train. Today I was successful.

After waiting a whole hour at Mikatahara PA next to Hamamatsu, a young man approached me and offered me a ride. His name is Yusuke and he was with his girlfriend, Noriko. It's not too often that young single couples pick me up; they consist of only 3% of the total.



Mt. Fuji viewed from Fujikawa  
Service Area

Yusuke and Noriko, both from Nagoya, were going mountain climbing that day and would be getting off the expressway at Shizuoka city. They offered to take me as far as the Fujikawa Service area. From Fujikawa there is a magnificent view of Mt. Fuji in good weather.

After close to another hour of waiting, a truck driver from Kure City in Hiroshima Prefecture offered me a ride as far as Kawasaki which is near Tokyo! Truck drivers are only 6% of the total of people who pick me up, and a truck driver on the expressway is probably less than half that percentage. He was a friendly guy, and quite intelligent compared to many truck drivers I've ridden with. He urged me not to return home to Niigata that day but to spend the night in Tokyo so I could see the total solar eclipse the next day, Monday May 21! "I can't," I replied, "I've got to be home by evening. We have a little dog that goes crazy with loneliness when nobody is around! If I don't return home tonight, there won't be anybody home to care for her!" The truck driver replied, "You're going to miss an opportunity that happens only once in a lifetime for a dog!"



Dog riding in the back of  
a motorcycle at Kokuho PA  
in Kawasaki.

The truck driver took me to Kokuho PA in Kawasaki. I had thought to walk to a train station from there and take trains to cross Tokyo to get to the Kanetsu expressway, but changed my mind thinking I might not only save money but time if I could catch a ride to some place in Saitama. It paid off. A married couple saw my Niigata sign and offered to take me to Narimasu station on the Tobu Tojo line! Great! From Narimasu it was only a short train ride to a station near the Miyoshi service area on the Kanetsu expressway, the highway home.

From Miyoshi SA 3 more vehicles took me back to Niigata. One was a couple from Brazil. Non-Japanese who pick me up are only 2% of the total of 2407 drivers who picked me up since I've been keeping statistics from August 2003.

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## [Hitchhike Adventure from Osaka to](#)

# Hamamatsu City



Left to right: Driver  
from Hiroshima  
Prefecture and Mr.  
Sayama, my hitchhike  
partner.

**May 18, 2012:** Today was the second day of my trip. The main purpose was to help my friend in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, to purchase and set up a laptop PC. It's only 290 kilometers (180 miles) from Osaka to Hamamatsu, half the distance I hitchhiked the day before from Niigata to Osaka, "a piece of cake!"

It was just after 9 a.m and only few minutes after arriving to the Suita Service Area of the Meishin Expressway when a young man walked close to where I was standing. He looked at me and I guessed immediately that he also was a hitchhiker! I've met up with other people hitchhiking, but it's pretty rare, only a handful of people in thousands of times. The man, Mr. Sayama, was on his way to Yokohama, about twice the distance I needed to go that day.

When the Japanese people tell me that hitchhiking is uncommon in Japan, I tell them that's why it's so easy to do it; I have no competition! Of course I'm joking. I didn't consider Mr. Sayama a competitor, but a potential partner in my journey.



Udon noodle lunch

I told Mr. Sayama that he need not worry about me. I would give him preference in case the driver was not willing to pick up more than one passenger. It turned out that we became a team! I met the first driver who



took us both to Otsu Service Area in Shiga Prefecture, and Mr. Sayama met the second driver, a man from Fukuyama Hiroshima Prefecture who took me as far as Shinshiro PA before Hamamatsu, and Mr. Sayama to Gotemba. The Hiroshima man bought us all a nice lunch of Udon noodles.

From Shinshiro PA a man working for an IT company took me to Hamamatsu Station.

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## May Hitchhike Adventure to Osaka



Jackie next to his French sports car

**May 17, 2012:** Osaka is about 600 kilometers or 400 miles from home. I made it in a very good time, 8.5 hours in 4 vehicles spending less than \$10 that day for food and a bit of public transportation to get me started.

The first driver, Tomoshi, is an airplane mechanic serving in the Japan Self Defense Force. He's stationed in Higashi Matsushima, Miyagi Prefecture, very close to where the tsunami of March 11, 2011 hit. Tomoshi was on his way to Kanazawa while his wife was in labor. He was hoping to be in time for the birth of his first child! I don't know if he made it in time or not, but he sure helped me get to my destination in a good time. Kanazawa is exactly half way to Osaka from Niigata.

The last driver, Jackie, a rather affluent looking businessman who speaks good English, was driving a French sports car, a Peugeot. I showed his photo to my Japanese friends, and they all recognized the car by the symbol on the hood.

Jackie is in the insurance business, a *dealer* with insurance companies! It's not very often I get to travel in an imported vehicle speaking to the driver

in English, but even rarer still, Jackie is one of those uncommon people in the world who is very knowledgeable about [who the real rulers of the world](#) are, their secret societies, and what their agenda is!

Jackie seemed to appreciate hearing what knowledge I have about the subject. He went out of his way to take me to the very area where my friend in Osaka lives.

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## May 6, 2012 Hitchhike Adventure: Hirosaki to Akita City



Miss Tomoko. She took  
from from Nagamine to  
Igarigaseki

Hirosaki was under a clear blue sky when I boarded the first train out of town at 6:54 a.m. My destination was home to Niigata and I was hoping to hitchhike all the way back from Nagamine station, just 3 train stations from Hirosaki and right on Route 7, a straight shot to Niigata. It turned out I was able to hitchhike in 5 rides only as far as Akita City. It started to rain just before car #5 and was raining heavily when I arrived in Akita City, still 270 kilometers from home. Heavy rain means the train the rest of the journey.

Car #1: A young single lady who works at Furutobe Spa. She took me as far as Igarigaseki, about half way to Odate City.

Car #2: A middle age man to Odate.

Car #3: A truck driver to Takenosu, part way to Noshiro City. I was surprised he stopped. The truck carries Home Center supplies. It's not very often for

truck drivers to stop for me.



Lady who took me to  
Noshiro City

Car #4: A middle age lady driving a van to Higashi Noshiro. She past me by, turned around and offered me a ride. It's not uncommon for drivers to turn around after considering for a few moments whether to pick me up. I explained to the lady some principles of my faith from the Book of Genesis. Favorite words in the Japanese language are "nature" and expressions of appreciation such as "thank you". I told her that if Genesis 1:1 is true, and we are created beings by God, shouldn't it be a part of our nature to say, "thank you" to our Creator for life and all things He created? She agreed and understood that point quite well!



Mrs. and Mr. Sakurada of Noshiro City

Car #5: Mr. And Mrs. Sakurada of Noshiro City who took me to Akita station. Mr. Sakurada loves history and he was completely turned on when I explained to him the real reason the Japanese Tokugawa government of the 16th century began to persecute Christians in Nagasaki. It was not the true Gospel of Christ that the Tokugawa government feared, it was the influence of ROME, the Roman Catholic church, the Pope and the Jesuits!! The Japanese government knew the power of Rome and what the Pope did to Europe. The Nagasaki Christians they persecuted were all Roman Catholics, people who would have their ultimate allegiance to the Pope, not to the Japanese government. Tokugawa Iemitsu feared revolt. He feared Japan would become a colony of Rome. He therefore closed Japan to foreigners, but *ESPECIALLY* to Roman Catholic countries like Portugal. He had no problem with the English or Dutch because he knew they broke off from Rome after the Protestant reformation. I told that to the driver and it was like turning on a light in his head. He immediately put together the dots and was totally amazed!