

Niigata city to Hamamatsu – second hitchhike adventure 2011



English speaking couple who took me
to Echigo Kawaguchi

January 22: This morning it snowed constantly, not too hard but enough to make me want to take a train the first part of this 500 kilometer plus journey. My destination was a port town in beautiful warm and usually sunny Shizuoka Prefecture. I knew the enough though it continued to snow in Niigata, on the other side of the mountains separating Niigata and the Kanto Plain, it would be sunny with little or no snow.

The train took me 30 kilometers to the Tsubame Sanjo train station which is next to the Hokuriku Expressway. From there I caught a 180 yen bus to the Sakae Parking Area. It connects to the Kan'estu expressway, a straight shot to Tokyo.



Snow at Echigo Kawaguchi

After only a few minutes wait I met a young married couple who were on their way to Muika Machi. They took me to Echigo Kawaguchi Service area, one of the snowiest areas of all of Japan. After I while I started to regret accepting that ride because I had a relatively long wait to catch the next ride, about 40 minutes. I had a warm coat and wasn't cold but it continued to snow as I stood in the parking area. Finally another young couple with a 3 year old son offered me a ride to Tokyo.



Mr. and Mrs. Maehara and 3 year old

son who took me to the Kohoku PA

It's easy to hitchhike to Tokyo from Niigata. The trick is to somehow get on the other side of Tokyo to the Tomei expressway which runs to Nagoya. This couple was going to Yokohama which meant they would be going in the direction I needed to go, and they took me to the Kohoku Parking Area which is on the Tomei – as good as it gets! It was just past 3PM, but now I was in a warmer dry area with a blue sky overhead and much traffic passing by. Success looked pretty certain.



Portuguese Water Dog



Man with Matsuda Mx5 sports car who took me to Ashigara SA.

Two more drivers took me as far as Ashigara Service Area with a beautiful view of Mt. Fuji toward the north. At Ashigara I saw an unusual looking dog. The owner said it is a Portuguese breed. I found on the internet what I think is the breed, a Portuguese water dog. But the dog on that page sure does look cuter than the one I saw!

It was now 5PM and soon to get dark. From experience I knew Ashigara was not an ideal place to hitchhike at. The traffic splits into two parts of the parking area. Standing too close to the place they merge was not fruitful because the cars are going too fast at that point. Mt. Fuji slowly faded into the darkness and I began to despair wondering if I would make it to Hamamatsu that day. I still had 200 kilometers left. There was plenty of traffic going at least that far or further, but everyone was ignoring me.



Mt. Fuji as seen from Ashigara just at sunset

By 5:45 PM it was already dark. I stood in a place with a bright lamp and tried to make eye-contact with the drivers passing by standing as close to the passing traffic as I deemed to be safe. One thing I've learned though the years is that no matter what the conditions I find myself in, the drivers who truly have a heart for those in need will stop no matter what. It's usually just a question of time. And of course there is the "God factor". I find when I have to wait the longest, it's usually because God has somebody special He wants me to meet. And today again it was so. At 6:40PM a man in his 30s on his way to Nagoya offered me a ride. His name is Mr. Inukai – a rather rare

family name in Japan. It literally means "Dog care".

Mr. Inukai is an interesting man because he had a problem of mental illness but largely recovered from it. He still has a problem with speaking – something I can identify with because I also have had Moses' handicap as written in Exodus 10:4 being 'slow of speech and of a slow tongue' At one point Mr. Inukai said he didn't want to talk anymore because his mouth was tired; it took him considerable effort to communicate orally which is something I understand very well.

I got to my destination in a good time, just before 9PM.

First hitchhike adventure 2011



Koji, an employee of a nuclear power plant. He took me from Misawa city to Hichinohe.



Family who took me from Hachinohe to Iwatesan Service Area

On January 9th I hoped to hitchhike from Misawa City in Aomori Prefecture back home to Niigata but I ended the day 130 kilometers short of my goal! The main reason was accepting a ride from Mr. Suzuki, (24) from Kushiro in

Hokkaido, who I met at Iwatesan Service area. He asked me if I would mind a stopover in Morioka city so he could do some shopping. Because Mr. Suzuki would be going all the way to Fukushima and therefore passing the Atadara service area which is just before the Ban'etsu junction, I didn't mind the delay, for he said it would be only "30 minutes or so." I assumed he meant he was going to the center of Morioka city, only a few minutes drive from the expressway.



Mr. Suzuki
who took
me to
Fukushima
Prefecture
from Iwate

It turned out Mr. Suzuki wasn't really going to Morioka city at all, but a small town 76 kilometers to the east of Morioka, and most of the way on snowy mountainous road! This "30 minutes" Mr. Suzuki referred to really only meant the shopping and didn't include the 3 hour car ride just to get to the shop and back to the expressway! Besides that, we also stopped several times for rest and once for dinner. By the time we arrived at Adatara, it was half past midnight! I didn't want to go further with him to Tokyo because it would be nearly 4AM when arriving, but there were too few cars in the service area parking lot to make it worth the effort to hitchhike further that day. So I looked around in the inside customer area and found a nice comfortable soft bench to lay down on. It was warm but brightly lit. I used a piece of luggage for a pillow, pulled my wool hat over my eyes, and had a good 6 hours sleep. Nobody bothered me and I think hardly anybody even noticed me or cared if they did. If in my home country, the USA, I'm sooner or later an officer of the law would be yanking on my feet waking me up abruptly and asking me to leave. This is what happened in 1978 when sleeping my my own car in a national park when traveling from Washington State back to Chicago.

The next morning there were still too few cars in the service area with no Niigata license plates, and so I opted to leave Atadara service area and take the regular road. Route 4 is only a 20 minute walk from there. In 3 cars and just before noon I returned to Niigata city. The final driver was a nurse on her way to Toyama Prefecture. She rescued me after waiting some 30 minutes at the cold and snowy Bansaisan Service area on the Ban'etsu expressway.

[Hitchhike stats for 2010](#)



Happy new year to all!

Yesterday, December 30th, I returned home after a very fruitful 12 day trip to the Kanto and Kansai areas of Japan. Kanto includes Tokyo and Kansai is all of the area of Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and surrounding towns and cities. The total distance hitchhiked in Japan this year was 15800 kilometers.

The graph below shows a comparison of the distance I hitchhiked this year compared to 4 previous years. As you can see, it was a bit less than last year's total of 19530 kilometers.



Graph of distances hitchhiked in Japan through the years

[Hitchhike from Tokyo to Osaka less than 6 hours](#)



Today in only two cars and a short 260 yen train ride, I made it from Tokyo to Osaka, right to the location of my destination, in only 5 hours and 45 minutes! This is very good time considering the distance of 500 some

kilometers. Normally when going to Osaka I'll arrive after 8PM, but today 4:15PM. If traveling from Niigata it would take me normally from 10 to 12 hours. Once I did it in 8 hours, also a record.

The first driver took me from Kohoku PA on the Tomei expressway to Ebina service area. He is a 7/11 employee.

After waiting approximately 30 minutes at Ebina, a tanker truck that carries some dangerous liquid chemical took me the rest of the way, an older man 66 years old, and the owner of the company. He said his load of liquid was delivered and he is returning empty.

The man had only 4 hours sleep the previous night and was both tired and sleepy at times. I kept up a conversation with him to keep him awake. It worked and we arrived to Osaka without incident.

Adventure hitchhiking to Saitama city



Today is the first day of another extended road trip. I hope to use this Christmas season to tell the Japanese people about Christ, and the best way I know how to do that is by hitchhiking when traveling and talking to the drivers individually.

I hitchhiked nearly 300 kilometers in three cars to the Kanto area which includes Tokyo and vicinity. My destination was Noda city in Chiba prefecture.

Two of the drivers went out of their way for me, the second driver, Mr. Tokaji very much so because it meant at least one hour extra of his time. He took me to Omiya station in Saitama City from where I took a train the rest of the way. There is a direct train from Omiya to Noda.

Mr. Tokaji said that he is a religious person. It is uncommon for me to hear such statements from Japanese people. Most say they're not interested in any matters related to faith.

Mr. Tokaji asked many questions about the Bible. He was impressed when I told him that both Christianity and Judaism helped mold Japanese culture from as early as the first century A.D. and that the chant “washoi washoi” that the Japanese say when carrying the *Omikoshi* is a Hebrew word meaning “carry”. Only a tiny percentage of the Japanese know of their Jewish/Christian roots.

Total cost for transportation today: 400 Japanese yen.

Adventure hitchhiking home from Misawa city, Aomori Prefecture



Nov. 14, 2010: Today I hitchhiked back home from Misawa city in Aomori, a distance of 570 kilometers, in only 8.5 hours and 3 cars! This was probably one of the quickest and easiest days ever hitchhiking such a distance.

Misawa is home to a large US Air Force base. Many of the people of the city can speak English. I’m sure they benefit economically from the base.

The first driver was a young father, Mr. Nagano, with his two sons, 5 and 6 years old in the back seat. He works as an air traffic controller at Misawa Air base and his wife works part time at a MacDonalds. Mr. Nagano was on his way to Hachinohe, but because he had extra time, and because he seemed to enjoy speaking to me in English, he took me way out of his way down the Hachinohe expressway to Orizumi Service area. From there it was much easier to get a ride rather than from the expressway entrance at Hachinohe.

The next car were 3 older ladies on their way to Mizusawa in Iwate Prefecture. They took me to Shiwa Service Area past Morioka. I was now in an excellent position to get to Adataru Service Area in Fukushima, the service area just before the Ban’etsu expressway junction. I needed to travel along the Ban’etsu if I hoped to get home that day.

The last driver, Mr. Motoki, was on his way to Maebashi city in Gunma. It was pretty much a straight shot for Mr. Motoki to go down the Tohoku expressway,

get off at Sano in Tochigi prefecture, and take the national highway route 50 toward Maebashi from where he would pick up yet another expressway, but he instead opted to take me to Niigata via the Ban'etsu expressway. It was a bit longer for him to go toward Niigata, but it is also a straight shot from Niigata to his destination of Maebashi.

It was dark by the time we reached Adata SA, and Mr. Motoki didn't want me to hitchhike in the dark, so he offered to take me home. It was probably better overall for Mr. Motoki to return the way he did, for he avoided at least one traffic jam and saved an extra 1000 yen in toll by staying on the expressway. On the weekends in Japan, if you have a "ETC card", you can travel any distance in Japan on the expressway for only a 1000 yen! This is only a fraction of the toll on a weekday.

Adventure to Akita station



I needed to travel from Niigata to Aomori city for important business the following day. If I hitchhike, I like to give myself two days to be on the safe side to be on time for such matters. Aomori city is 470 kilometers from home and mostly by regular highway. I often can only get as far as Akita city – a little over half way – where I spend the night at a friend's house. But this time I couldn't spare an extra day. That meant a long ride by the slow, non-express train to save money.

There was an hour and a half wait time between changing trains in Akita. Rather than take the train to Akita station, I opted to get off at Kamihama station which is close to Route 7 and half way between Sakata city and Akita city. The train station man was surprised I got off at Kamihama. He said, "There is nothing here!" I told him, "I'll find something to do!"

After only a few minutes wait at the traffic signal just in front of the station, a man in a recycle truck carrying what he referred to as "sleeping resources" (a junk motorcycle and some metal trash) picked me up and said he could take me just before Akita city, about 80 kilometers! I knew I could still easily make the train connection at Akita station if I couldn't

hitchhike further past Akita.

The man, Mr. Shindo (63) is a metal recycle dealer. His business card says, "Metal recycle with a smile". Mr. Shindo's philosophy of life is similar to mine. "Life is a journey" he says. It began to rain and so he decided after a while to take me all the way to Akita station. On the way Mr. Shindo bought me a nice lunch of fried noddles and introduced me to his lady friend at the noodle shop. By hitchhiking, I made two new friends, got a free lunch, and saved 1000 yen of train fare. Life is indeed a journey.

Adventure hitchhiking to Okabe station in Saitama



Nov. 6, 2010: Today my destination was Konosu city in Saitama Prefecture, some 250 kilometers from home. I got to Okabe station on the Takasaki line in 4 cars. The third vehicle was Mr. Mrs. Noda, dentists who live in Kamo City in Niigata Prefecture. Every time I meet a dentist, I always show them my teeth and they exclaim how nice they are. I inherited exceptionally strong teeth from my mother who had all of hers up to when she turned 80. I'm 60 years old and never had a cavity.

The Nodas took me to the Yorii parking area on the Kan'etsu expressway which is not far from Hanazono interchange. I hoped to catch a ride exiting the expressway at Hanazono that was going in the direction of Kumagaya city, the big city not far from Konosu. But after waiting over 30 minutes with no success, I opted to leave the parking area out the back parking area workers' gate and try to catch a ride on the regular road. I never got off the Kan'etsu expressway at Yorii before and was unfamiliar with the area. I soon learned it is an especially remote place, far from a large city, and there was no traffic along the country road I was walking on! I only had the setting sun to my back to know I was going in the right direction. I've joked sometimes that because Japan is so small with so many trains, if you walk in any direction for any length of time, you are bound to arrive at a train station that goes somewhere. This is true but that "length of time" could be

very long indeed if you are deep in the country like I was. It would have taken me well over an hour to walk it, and I was hauling a rather heavy piece of luggage.

Finally a car approached me. The nice thing about being deep in the country is that usually the very first car will stop, and so was the case today. The driver was glad to give me a lift to the closest station for he was going that way. I would have walked further than I needed to without him not knowing the roads.

Ten day hitchhike adventure circling central Japan



The red line is the route I traveled by hitchhiking.

October 24 to Nov. 3, 2010: I hitchhiked 1390 kilometers in 18 vehicles to cities in the Kanto plain (Tokyo and vicinity), Osaka, and then returned home by a different route along the Sea of Japan. As you can see from the map, I didn't hitchhike the entire distance. On two occasions friends happened to be going toward my destination and gave me a lift, and several times I had to take trains for expediency sake.



Tokyo Bay
Aqua-Line

I traveled along the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line for the very first time, a bridge

and tunnel that crosses Tokyo bay. By car this is the fastest way to get from southern Chiba to Kawasaki bypassing the traffic congested Tokyo area and saving 65 kilometers in distance. I had wondered how it could be possible to build a bridge that spans the bay at one point and goes into the bay midway, but as you can see from the photo on the right, the bridge reaches a man made island at the point the tunnel begins.

Because I had to take three trains from Kawasaki after getting off the Aqua line to get back to the expressway at Kokuho parking area on the Tomei, I wondered if I really *did* save time. It was a case of a “bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” because the driver just happened to be going that direction and getting rides through Tokyo was far less certain. I wanted to be in Osaka that evening to avoid the rains of a coming Typhoon, and so spending 770 yen train fare to help speed my journey seemed worth the money.

I met a hitchhiker while heading toward Osaka at the Kohoku parking area on the Tomei expressway, a lady from France who was going to Shimoda, the southern city of the Izu peninsular in Shizuoka Prefecture. It's very rare to see other hitchhikers in Japan, and this is the first time ever to find a female hitchhiking, an older lady at that! She said she's older than me so that would be in her mid 60s. I felt sorry for her because her Japanese is not very good though she says she's lived in Japan already for 10 years, and because her destination was rather hard to get to, mostly by low road. I told her it would be better if we hitchhike together. I found the Japanese are more apt to pick up male/female couples. The first car, a married couple, took us to Ebina service area past Atsugi, and the second driver took her as far as Ashigara near Mt. Fuji.

Hitchhiking on a rainy day to Saitama



Hisami and Toshio Yamaguchi. They went out of their way to take me to

Sakae PA on the Hokuriku Expressway

October 15, 2010: Today was cloudy with light showers from time to time. I needed be in the city of Kumagaya in Saitama Prefecture by 10:30AM the next day for important business. My destination was Noda city in Chiba Prefecture, about 300 kilometers from home. Noda is close to Tokyo to the northeast. From there I would make it in two trains to Kumagaya in plenty of time if I left by 8AM.

The first ride, Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi who were heading to Nagaoka City by regular road, went out of their way for me to take me to Sakae Parking area on the Hokuriku expressway. After waiting slightly over an hour at Sakae and getting a bit impatient, a man from the Tohoku Power Co. offered to take me to Muika Machi, nearly a 1/3 of my journey. He took me to the Muika Machi interchange.

After a few minutes it started to rain. I spotted a Jusco department store only a couple hundred meters away and walked to it. By the time I got there, it began raining pretty hard. I was glad to have shelter and eat lunch at the Jusco.

Thirty minutes later the rain stopped and I walked back to the interchange. After about 15 minutes, a Noodle shop man took me to Echigo Yuzawa, about 22 kilometers further. He looked different from most Japanese because of his long sideburns, something uncommon in Japan. There is a Parking Area called Ishiuchi about 6 kilometers before Echigo Yuzawa, but I didn't want to get off there because there were only a dozen cars parked in the area. That might have been a mistake because things did not go according to expectation at Echigo Yuzawa! Half a dozen drivers offered me rides, but they were all going back in the direction I just came from. This is just the opposite of what I experienced at the same place a couple years ago! I was heading home to Niigata, but all the drivers where going the opposite way toward Tokyo.

After waiting over an hour, it was getting dark just a little after 5PM. I checked the train time with my cell phone's Internet connection and found a train leaving at 5:56PM. This train with its connections would get me to Noda before midnight. The station was about a 20 minute walk from the interchange and I started walking toward it going up route 17 with traffic heading to Saitama and still holding out a paper sign showing my destination in a last ditch effort to catch a ride. It paid off! A kind man who sells Japanese pastries took me as far as Shinmachi Station on the Takasaki line in Saitama Prefecture! This saved me over 2000 yen and at least an hour of time because he took the expressway which is much faster than local trains.

Hitchhike adventure to Misawa city, Aomori city, Saitama prefecture Soka city, (next to Tokyo) Niigata city



On October 8th, 2010, from Sendai, the largest city in the northeastern area of Japan, I hitchhiked in 8 vehicles to the city of Misawa in Aomori Prefecture. Misawa city is host to a US Air Force military base. Yours truly served the Air Force and the government of the United States of America from February 10, 1970, to February 9, 1974. I appreciated the discipline of military life, and seriously considered before my tour of duty expired to continue my server my government, the United States of America. However, after 3 years and 9 months left in my military duty, I felt called to a higher calling. I wanted to do more in life than follow my wife's shopping cart when buying groceries to feed me and the rest of the family. I felt called to be an ambassador to the Kingdom of the Creator, Jesus, Yeshua.

Every person I encounter in life is a unique experience for me to understand why the Creator made us like Him but yet so different from each other. A few of the kind Japanese people who picked me up:





Hitchhike adventure to Sendai through Fukushima



22 year old Takeshi who
took me to Nihonmatsu

Oct. 6, 2010: Today was one of those “as good as it gets” experiences when hitchhiking in Japan. I traveled on a rainy day in 6 cars some 250 kilometers from Niigata to Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku area. It was ALL on normal highway! Usually I try to catch cars that are going on the expressway, but I learned from experience that it’s not easy to do so going from Niigata. There are too few cars going east on the Ban’etsu expressway that goes to Fukushima. Route 49 is slower but surer.

My purpose was to visit friends to fix their PC. The hard disk on their PC was registering an Ultra DMA CRC error count of 9478, and I believed that to be the cause of it failing from time to time.

The rain was light and intermittent. I didn’t think it would be too much of a problem. Normally I try to avoid hitchhiking in the rain, but I had a certain schedule to follow that made traveling today unavoidable.

A truck driver, Mr. Miura, took me in a single ride from Niigata to Route 4 near Koriyama city in Fukushima. He was driving a rather large truck. It’s pretty rare these days for truck drivers to stop for me. I couldn’t be in a better situation than to go directly to Route 4, for it was well over half way to my destination and a straight shot to Sendai.

On Route 4, the first driver was 22 year old Takeshi. He took me to the Nihonmatsu interchange on the Tohoku Expressway. Takeshi told me that the people of Fukushima are very kind, and I certainly found that to be true considering the ones I met later! He would have taken me as far as Fukushima, but I had hoped to catch a car going on the Tohoku expressway and save a bit of time. After waiting some minutes at the expressway entrance, I realized I

made a mistake. There were too few cars going on the expressway and it was likely I would have to wait a few long time to catch a ride. I walked back to Route 4 which was a good kilometer away from the interchange.

The next driver, Mr. Motoyuki, (27) said he used to be a professional boxer but quit after too many losses. Now he sells supplies to beauty salons. Mr. Motoyuki took me to Fukushima city.

The next driver was a man who sells motorbikes. He took me to Mikuni.

After about 15 minutes standing at a traffic light with an umbrella over my head during a light rain, a man pulled up and offered me a ride. He saw my sign, turned around and came back from me. His name is Mr. Aizawa. Though he had just come from Sendai, some 70 kilometers further, he offered to take me there, all the way to my destination! This meant he was willing to go 140 kilometers out of his way just to help me! I protested saying that I didn't want to trouble him, but he insisted saying he wanted to help a person in need. Mr. Aizawa is a caretaker for elderly people. I often get rides from people whose job it is to care for others. I had a great time sharing with Mr. Aizawa basic truths from the Bible, especially from the first 3 chapters of the book of Genesis, and he seemed to enjoy and appreciate it.

Return trip from Saitama



Oct. 3, 2010: Today I hitchhiked from Sayama City just north of Tokyo back home to Niigata in 6 cars. At first, I had to walk about 45 minutes to get to the highway that goes to the Kan'etsu expressway. After that, a driver in a sports car took me to Kawagoe Interchange. He said his dream was to become an F-10 jet fighter pilot but couldn't because he would have had to become an American as well. I told him that once I met a fighter pilot in the Japanese self-defense force. He said it's no fun having your body daily

subjected to tremendous g-forces in sharp turns during training exercises.

The next car took me to the Miyoshi Service area. Though Miyoshi is actually in the opposite direction, the direction going to Tokyo instead of Niigata, because it is only a few minutes up the road I usually accept rides there because I know how to walk around to the other side of the service area. There is an access road that goes under the expressway. It's about a 10-minute walk.

From Miyoshi two cars took me to Kamisato just before Gunma. After a relatively short wait, 4 men picked me up and took me the majority of the way back home, about 200 kilometers further. But I still had about 15 kilometers left. Though I could have taken a train the rest of the way, because it was still early and good weather, and the men left me off on a road that is relatively a straight shot back home, I hitchhiked and caught a ride with the Saito family. There were 3 small children in the car, the oldest being 11. Mrs. Saito was so amazed to hear of my hitchhiking adventures over the years, and how far I have traveled and met so many people.

October 1st hitchhike adventure to Saitama



Yuki Sakai who
took me to Saitama
from Niigata

Oct. 1, 2010: Today I hitchhiked from Niigata city to Sayama city, a distance of about 280 kilometers, in only 3 cars. There was very little waiting time for the first two cars, but I had to wait 2 hours for the third and final ride. The driver was only 19 years old and has been driving for only one year. It was very interesting to talk to such a young man.

Adventure hitchhiking in Akita Prefecture



September 20, 2010: Today I was in Noshiro City, a town in northern Akita Prefecture, northern Honshu, the main island of Japan. My goal was to hitchhike as much as possible the 330 kilometers back home to Niigata. I ended up hitchhiking nearly a 1/3 of the distance, and this brought me [just over the 100,000 kilometer mark](#) since keeping statistics from August 2, 2003! I had hoped to hitchhike a million kilometers before I leave this world, but at the rate I'm doing it, I need 60 more years. ☐



Man who helped me
get to the road
leading out of
Noshiro

After some business in Noshiro city, a town in the northern part of Akita Prefecture, I walked toward what I thought was route 7 to head home to Niigata. I used to visit Noshiro often from 1976-77 but now it was an unfamiliar place. It turned out that my directions were totally mixed up and I was standing on the side of the street with traffic heading north, not the southern direction I needed to go. A kind man saw my Niigata sign and informed me of my mistake. He then circled around, picked me up, and took me to a good spot to hitchhike on route 7 which was a considerable distance from where I had been standing!

It's always amazing to me how God engineers the timing just right for me to meet special people. After waiting just a few minutes where the man dropped me off on Route 7, Akiko, a 32 year old dental clinic receptionist picked me up and took me as far as Iwakawa Sakura station, a distance about 30 kilometers.

Akiko is still single and likes to study and speak English. I told her that she might be happier to marry a Westerner some day, rather than a Japanese man. Because Christianity and principles of New Testament love has influenced

Western culture a great deal, most Westerners are used to showing affection toward their spouses. This is something sadly lacking to a great degree in Japanese culture. Husbands and wives hardly hug each other in private, and never in public. I explained to her that when in Russia, I frequently saw public displays of affection, and not only among lovers, but between older married couples.

Because Akiko had been to Hawaii before, I thought she might be interested to know my theory of the Hawaiian word "*aloha*" which is said in both greeting and parting. Most people don't know that *aloha* in the Hawaiian language means "[a way of living and treating each other with love and respect](#)." Before the Hawaiians became Christians after their Queen Kapi'olani, shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ to her people in the 19th century, I do not think they used this word in greetings. The Hawaiians used to be a barbaric savage and cannibalistic people. I believe that it was only after coming to know the love of God in Jesus Christ they started using the word *aloha* for greetings and partings.

An external website that I believe confirms my theory: [Queen Kapi'olani, the First Christian Convert in Hawaii](#).

After waiting nearly an hour in intermittent rain, a mother and daughter picked me up and took me as far as Akita City. The mother looks so young that at first I thought they were sisters! The daughter went to a Christian high school which is not common among the Japanese. The education is good but the tuition is 3 times more than a regular school.

From experience I knew the spot where the mother and daughter dropped me off in Akita city was not a very good one. I walk down the road to get to a better traffic light. At the third traffic light further down, a young man picked me up and took me to a truck parking stop on the other side of the city. The area was deserted with no trucks waiting, not a very desirable situation for me, but I was glad to be past Akita city because that greatly increased my chances of catching a ride.

Just a couple minutes after getting dropped off, a police car pulled up and two policemen walked up to me questioning me what I was doing and why I was there. I knew I wasn't doing anything wrong and it was OK for me to be standing where I was. The policeman said they just thought it was unusual to see somebody standing in the truck parking area without a car nearby. I smiled and answered their questions. They thanked me for my cooperation and left.

I also immediately left the parking area to walk to an intersection, but I knew there may not be one for a considerable distance in that country area. After walking some 30 minutes, a lady named Nanae picked me up. I asked her if she often picked up hitchhikers and she said it was her third time experience. Nanae operates a machine to demolish houses.

It was already 5PM and raining. Rather than hitchhike further I opted to take a train the rest of the way spending 4300 yen. I did save some 2000 yen by hitchhiking. But much more than saving a bit of money, I value the experience

of meeting the kind people I met.

Akita Prefecture for some reason has the highest suicide rate among all the prefectures in Japan. My prayer is they will come to know that God's love is the ultimate answer to their problems.

[Return to Niigata from Saitama](#)



Masako's daughter Saori with her 8 month old baby

Today I traveled back home from Toride city in Ibaragi prefecture. At first I took three trains to get to Fujimino station on the Tobu line, the station that is closest to Miyoshi parking area on the Kan'etsu expressway. Normally I would take a bus from the station to get to an even closer point, but I got tired of waiting for the bus and decided to hoof it. It was only a 30 minute walk.

After another 30 minute wait, two ladies, a mother and her daughter holding her 8 month old baby girl picked me up and took me as far as Akagikogen service area. This is excellent for it is past Takasaki and the junction that runs toward Nagano.



Masako who took me to Akagi kogen

Road trip to Tokyo



Mother with her 7 week old baby

Yesterday I had a very smooth trip hitchhiking to Tokyo from Niigata in only two cars. This was an encouragement to me because the previous 3 trips were difficult and caused me considerable discomfort.

The first driver was a lady with a 7 week old baby in the car seat in the back. She took me to the Sanjo-Tsubame interchange of the Hokuriku expressway. From there I took a 180 yen 5 kilometer bus ride to Sakae parking area.

At the parking area I saw two bikers, one of whom appeared to be a foreigner. The Japanese biker told me, "Japanese people don't like to pick up hitchhikers." I replied, "Some do!"



Eddy

And after a relatively short wait at Sakae, I was picked up by two men. The driver's name is Eddy, a real estate agent, who spoke some English. He told me he is a Christian and proved it by sharing some of his favorite Bible scriptures with me! Usually the Japanese Christians I meet are merely church goers whose religion appears to be more of tradition than real faith, but I could tell that Eddy is different. He recently married a lady from Harbin China and said he will visit me in October after picking up his wife at Niigata airport. He wants me to do a little ceremony to give him and his wife a blessing for their marriage. I am honored to have Eddy for a new friend.

I told Eddy I have a lot of Chinese Bibles at home and I would be happy to send him one. He promptly gave me 1000 yen to do so. Upon returning home to Niigata, that was one of the first things I did. Eddy called me the next day

thanking me for the Bible. It is an entire Bible in new Chinese for the People's Republic of China, and I would be happy to send one to anybody in exchange for a donation to cover postage.

Fun hitchhike back home from Saitama



Tuesday, August 10, 2010: Today I had another relatively hard experience hitchhiking. The root of the word "hitchhike" comes from "hitch" (to ride) and "hike" (to walk) and today I did a whole lot of walking, more than yesterday.



Children of the
mother who took me
to Hanazono

In the beginning it went very well. A lady going to Nagano said she will take me to the Kamisato service area, but as we approached Hanazono, we faced a big traffic jam that was caused by a car accident. The electronic sign said it would take 70 minutes to travel the next 20 kilometers! So she decided to get off at the Hanazono interchange and take the low road. This meant that I had to get off at Hanazono.



Traffic jam due to
accident. The sign
says "70 minutes
to go 12
kilometers"

As soon as I started to hitchhike at the Hanazono IC, a policeman saw me and ordered me to leave the area! I was too close to the toll booth which is part of the expressway.

I walked to the normal road and tried to catch cars going on the expressway, but they were going too fast to stop. Then looking at the map, I saw that Yorii Parking area may be close enough to walk to. It appeared to be about 5 kilometers and I thought maybe I could walk there in an hour. But after walking 45 minutes I saw a sign that Yorii was yet 3 kilometers further up the road! In all it took me an hour and 20 minutes to walk it. The total distance is 8.4 kilometers or 5.25 miles. I walked at a rate of 6.3 kilometers an hour or about 4 miles an hour. My shirt and undershirt was drenched with perspiration when I arrived in Yorii and so I changed to another shirt at the parking area restroom.



Dr. Suzuki who
took me to
Kamisato just
before Gunma. We
have a mutual
friend.

But the effort to get to Yorii paid off. After a relatively short wait, a man, Dr. Suzuki, picked me up and took me to Kamisato. He is a medical doctor. And it turned out we have a mutual friend, James Rudow of Sayama city!



A chemical
engineer from
Yokohama who took
me to Niigata

After another relatively short wait in Kamisato, a man from Yokohama took me to Sanjo city which is the next town to Niigata. From there a lady took me to a train station only 3 stations away from mine and I caught a train the rest of the way. Total transportation cost from Sayama: 190 yen.

[Tramatic adventure hitchhiking from](#)

Kansai



Monday, August 9, 2010: After an unsuccessful attempt to hitchhike from Suita service area in central Osaka yesterday, today I thought to make it easier on myself by taking a train to Otsu city in Shiga Prefecture, just on the other side of Kyoto. The Hankyu line is the cheapest train in Japan and it only cost 390 yen to get as far as Kyoto.



Young couple who took me from Otsu
toward Kussatsu



Young couple who went out of their
way to take me to Kussatsu
interchange

After searching more than an hour for a ride at Otsu service area, I felt the situation wasn't any better than the one yesterday. This is now Obon season during which time the Japanese like to visit their home towns. Normally I find Obon an easy time to hitchhike, but this year seemed to be different. Is it because I'm getting older?

I realized that since the completion of the Shin (new) Meishin highway that connects to the Meishin just 10 kilometers down the road, the preponderance of traffic would be taking the ShinMeshin to go to Nagoya. But I needed to continue down the older route, the one that goes to the Hokuriku junction at Maibara. I therefore thought that by leaving the expressway parking, and hitchhiking down the low road just 10 more kilometers further, I would be on the other side of the Shinmeshin entrance and more likely to catch a ride. It took me over 2 hours to hitchhike only 10 kilometers in two rides! The first ride I caught immediately from a young couple, but the second ride took me

well over an hour. Now finally at the Kussatsu interchange I had to wait yet another 1.5 hours for the next ride! I wondered if I made a mistake leaving Otsu. Now was stuck where I was at and couldn't go anywhere else. The Kussatsu interchange where I was waiting was my only hope. Just a couple days ago I told a driver that when it sometimes takes a long time to catch a ride, it always ends up in a wonderful experience meeting somebody special. Now God was really testing me to see if I really believed that statement and have patience to wait further! I started to think about retiring from hitchhiking.

Finally the most unlikely looking vehicle picked me up. It was a deliver truck with two men in the front, and the back was so full of packages I had no room to sit down anywhere. I had to squeeze between a box and the side of the truck. The men were going the direction from whence I came, toward Kyoto. The Kussatsu Service Area was just a couple minutes down the road, and I got off there.

Now my problem is figuring out how to get to the parking area on the opposite side of the expressway with traffic going the way I needed to go. I found an overpass and walked to a gate that appeared to be used for the parking area, and I saw a lady passing through the gate. I realized she must have come from the parking area, but on the other side of the gate was a sound barrier with no apparent entrance or way to get either over it or around it. I walked toward the left, found a siding door on the wall, and tried to open it. It was locked. I walked toward the right, found another sliding door, and it opened!



Mr. Mochihara who took from Shiga prefecture to Sayama city, Saitama

The parking area going toward Niigata and Tokyo is much smaller, with fewer cars, but it was my only hope. After only a few minutes, I met a man who was traveling all the way from Miyazaki in Kyushu and asked him for a ride. His name is Mr. Mochihara, he speaks English, and was friendly. This is the man who made it worth it all that suffering! Our conversation was not only pleasant, it was deep about the basic things of life. And went out of his way to take me directly to my friend's house in Sayama city, and saved me from having to hitchhike further in the heat of this hot summer.

[On the road in Osaka](#)



It took me nearly 14 hours today to hitchhike 560 kilometers to Osaka! I got stuck for a period of time at the halfway point in the city of Kanazawa. A parking attendant at Fudoji parking area on the Hokuriku expressway asked me to leave. I walked down to the regular road, hitchhiked to the next big interchange, and got back on the expressway two hours later.



Man who took me to Kanazawa in his
BMW



Mr. and Mrs. Izumi with 3 year old
daughter Chitose. They took me from
Yoneyama SA to Nadachihama after a
brief stop for shopping in Joetsu
City



Kohei and Kayo who took me from
Kanazawa to Fukui



Ken and Shigeru. They took me to
Shiga Prefecture from Fukui
Prefecture.

The highlight of this trip was to get a ride in a convertible two seater BMW sports car with the top down. Though it rained a bit when riding, the rain didn't fall on us but was blown over the car's windshield.