

ISSN 1883-7409 (print)  
ISSN 1884-0183 (on-line)



*Outside the Box:  
The Tsukuba Multi-  
Lingual Forum*

Volume 4, Issue 1

Autumn, 2011

Foreign Language Center

Tsukuba University

Japan

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# *Around the World*

## ~~Think~~ *Travel* Outside the Box

Shinichi Nagata



Howdy! I have come back again here to the *OTB Forum* to share the excitement of traveling with you.

My name is Shinichi Nagata. I am a former student of the University of Tsukuba, a world traveler for a little while, and now I am a research assistant for the *OTB Forum* editors. I had backpack to go about twenty countries last time at once. This is the second article of my travel tips. Today, we will focus on local transportation.

It's very common to fly and take taxis to get around when traveling. Yes, those take you to anywhere you want right away. But wait a minute; there are many exciting alternatives, too.

There are three reasons why I recommend using the local transportation.

The first reason is the cost. It's CHEAP. I didn't have much cash. I wanted to save money, so it was rather necessary for me to use local transportation stretch our my trip as long as possible. How much different is the cost then? Let's look at India. It only cost 25 rupees = 0.5USD, whereas a taxi costs 100

rupees = 2USD (and the driver will ask you for a tip of 50 rupees =1USD).

The second reason is that you have more chances to meet locals. When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. You might be in trouble, but there is no need to worry. Locals often offer help to you. Moreover, don't worry about the language. Even if you have a difficult time communicating in the spoken language, you can try gestures instead. You might have a stereotypical image of the nationality, but once you actually talk to the people, you often find it was a misconception.

The third reason is that you can see the transition from one cultural area to the other. There are stretches of mixed culture around the border. If you fly from one country to the next, you cannot see them. You can see border lines on the map, so you might think the areas on the border are all the same, but they're not. Local transportation will lead you to those remote regions.

The listing below is the example of local transportation.

### ***Subway***

The easiest local transportation is the subway or light rail. No worries—most subways have useful maps. And it takes you

Nagata, S. (2011). Travel outside the box. *OTB Forum*,4(1), 60-63.



Figure 1. The main subway station in Georgia

to the stations on railway. If you get off at the wrong station, then you go back the same way. You will notice the minor differences like ticketing or the train body. It's interesting to observe the behavior of locals when you are on board.

In the old Soviet Union countries, the subways are interesting. The first thing is that platforms are located deep underground, so the escalators to the platform are very long – it would be a shelter if a nuclear war happened. There are also policemen in every station. You will be asked to show your passport, or be asked some questions – they are looking for spies. Here you still can see the remains of the Cold War.

**Local bus**

You can find a local bus system almost everywhere. It is a little bit more difficult than taking the subway, but it's worth trying. You will have more chances to talk with the locals, or maybe it's just necessary to talk with them because the bus signs often don't help, as there are rarely English subtitles. You have to figure out which bus to take, and when to get off. In most cases you will find some people who speak English, but even if they don't, they'll try hard to help you.

My favorite buses were in India and the Middle East countries. They play loud ethnic music. It's noisy and energetic! Amazingly,

it's not uncomfortable. Those help you feel that you are in a new country.

**Shared Taxi**

Even though its name is taxi, you cannot ask the driver where to go. It runs on a fixed route but you can get off anywhere you want on the way. In some places, you have to wait for enough people to fill all the seats. It's popular all over

the world. For the mini bus-type share taxi, the price is fixed, but with a van or sedan-type car, you have to negotiate the price. I tried in the Philippines, the Middle East, and Central Asia. In Philippines, it is called "Jeepney". It is mini-bus type. It doesn't politely stop for you to get on. You have to literally hop on it when it slows down in heavy traffic. In Uyghur province in China, it don't even have a roof!

In the Middle East countries, you have to wait long time to leave, but during that time, you'll have a chance to make friends with locals.

**Bike taxis**



Figure 2. A shared taxi in Uighur province in China.

Bike taxis prevail in many areas such as in China, India, Thailand, and there are so many names for them: "Rickshaw" in India, "Tuk-Tuk" in Thailand, "San Lun Chu Zu Che (三轮车出租车)" in China, and "Tricycle" in the Philippines.

Basically there are only one or two passengers for one bike taxi. That means there is slightly higher chance of being ripped off.

Just make sure to set the deal before you get on it. Otherwise, you might be in trouble when you get off. It is always fun to chit chat, and it's also fun to negotiate the price.



Figure 3. A rickshaw in India.

### **Hitchhiking**

It probably is the most difficult way, but you might need to do that if you want to go to places that are off the beaten track. Actually, hitchhiking is very common in East Europe, where people even hitchhike to commute to work...

Actually, I am not a good hitchhiker, but I tried to hitchhike when I had no other choice. I did it in Kyrgyzstan to go across the border into China. There was almost no regular traffic, but I managed to get a ride in a huge truck. It was my first time to ride in a truck—it was so tall. The snow-covered mountains were around and there were no houses at all, so it was very touching scenery.

Is traveling only for youngsters? I don't think so. I met so many travelers who work full time, on the frontline in each field. They were taking two weeks to one month off from work to hit the road. They were energetic. They added interaction with locals to make their travel more interesting and exciting. Local transportation is often the gateway to the local world. Once you are out of your country, do you ask for the same standard and quality? Try new virtue and behavior. Broad your acceptance range!

Once you are out of your country, a whole new people, with new experiences,

and interesting transportation!

Finally, you can also find my travel story on my map and blog at

<http://travelshin.wordpress.com/>

<http://travelshin.wordpress.com/>

I hope you enjoy these and find them helpful as travel tips. Have a great trip!



Figure 4. Hitchhiking a ride in Kyrgyzstan.

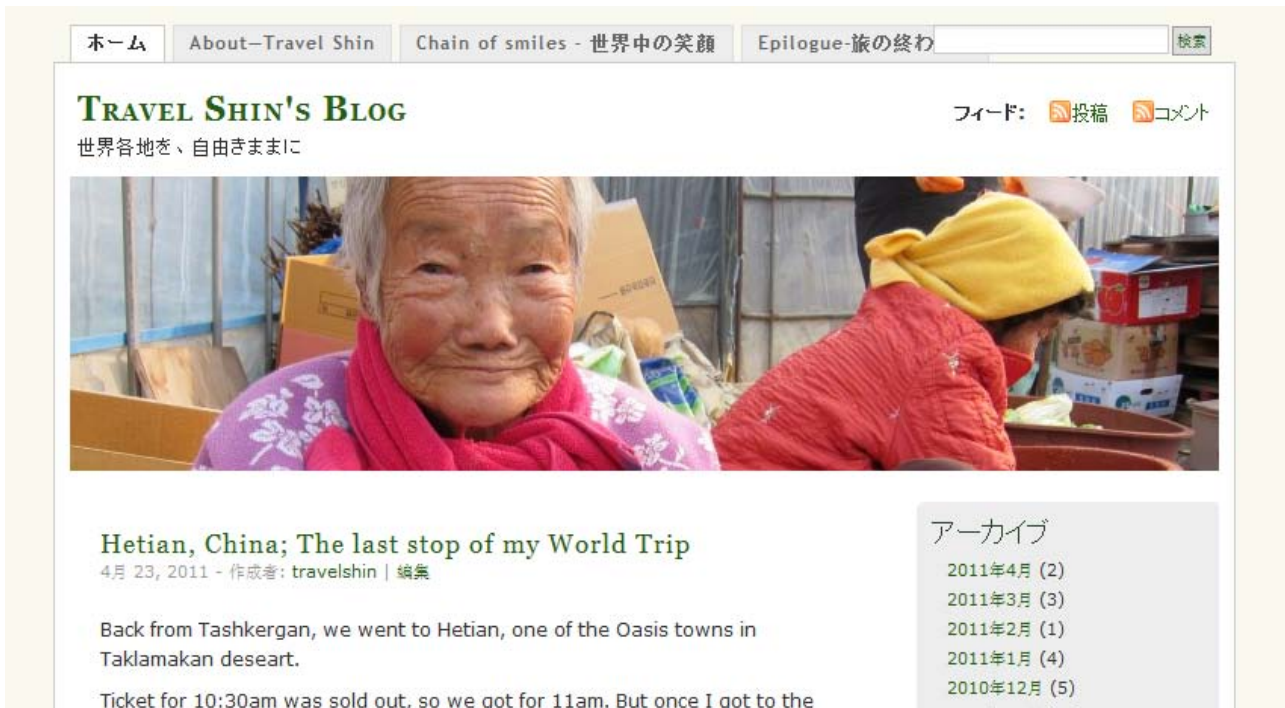


Figure 5. Mr. Nagata's 'Travel Shin' blog.

**About the author:** Shinichi Nagata is originally from Ibaraki, Japan, and during his college career he spent time working as a volunteer in Toronto. He graduated in 2009 from the Department of Disability Studies in the College of Human Sciences at the University of Tsukuba.

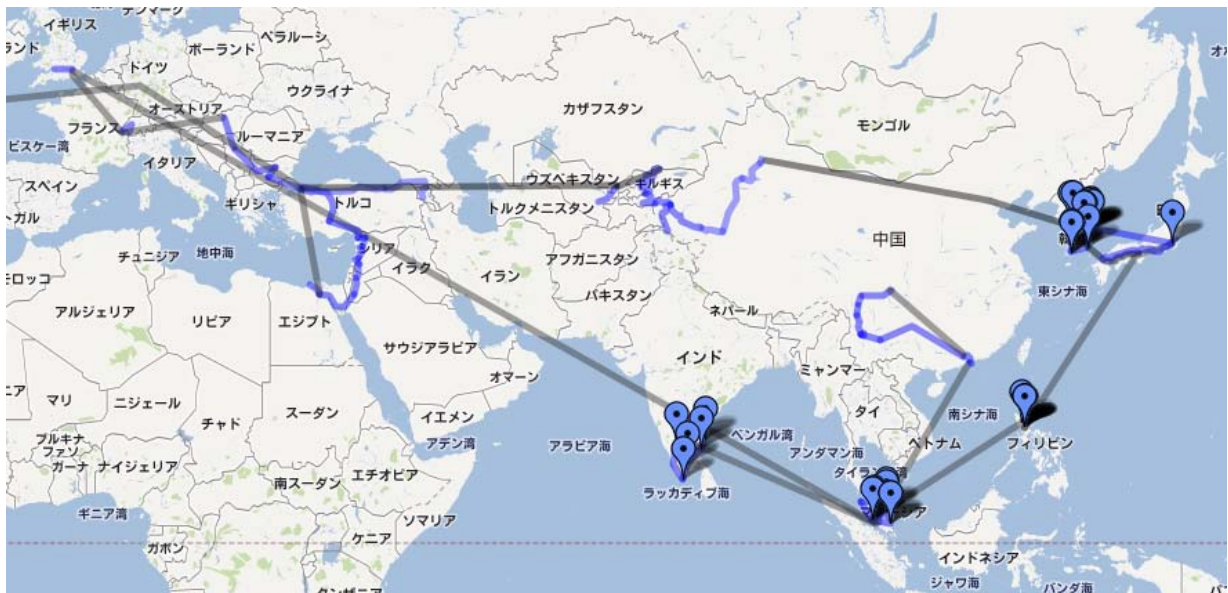


Figure 6. Mr. Nagata's map of his journey.