

From The Eastern Front

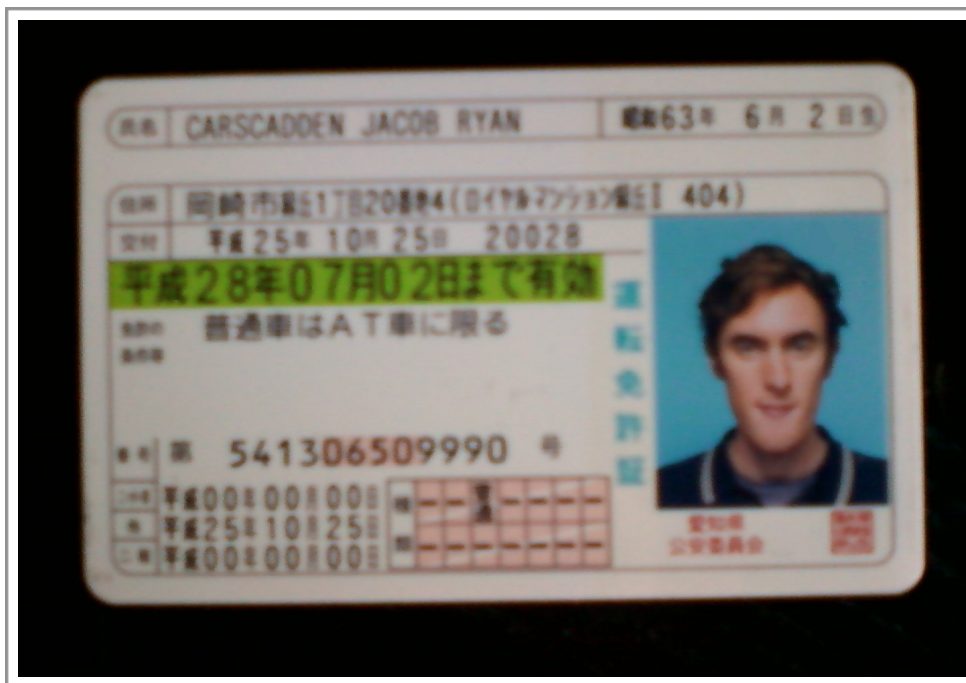
By Jacob Carscadden

February 20, 2014

Greetings from Okazaki, Japan!

Many things have happened since I last wrote, and many changes are about to take place. From April, things are going to get a lot more exciting around here.

Japanese Driver's License



Back in October, after a mountain of paperwork and red tape, I finally took the driver's license exam. Somehow, I managed to pass it on my first try.

It was quite nerve-wracking. How they do it in Japan is, everyone that takes the test does so within a two-hour block. Everyone is assigned a number and must wait their turn to drive. I was last in line, so I had to sit on the sidelines and wait for two hours to take a six-minute driving test. After the test, they don't tell you if you passed or failed. The judge said nothing during the exam. He only made notes every so often. After the exam, he gave me some advice about turning, and that was that.

Back in the main building, everyone assembled and the officials announced who passed. Out of about 25 people, I was 1 of 3 that passed. The rest will have had to take the exam again on another day.

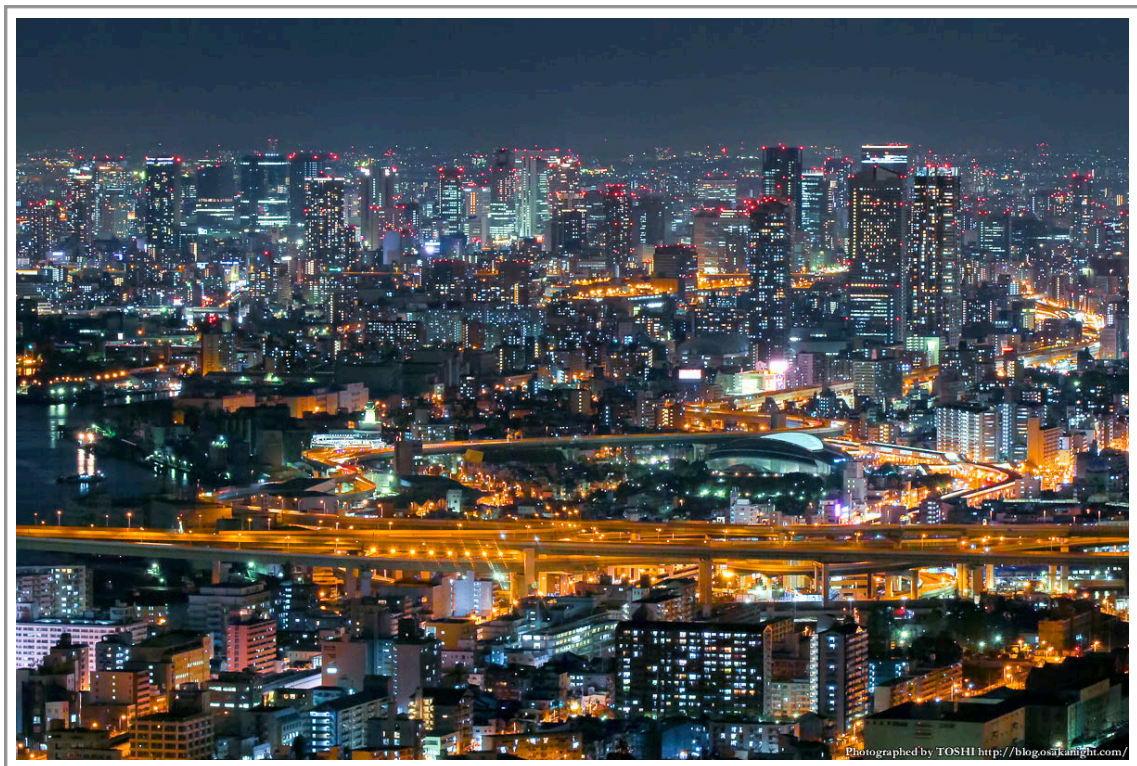
I was relieved to finally be done with that whole process so quickly. I was told I'd probably have to take the exam 3-5 times like most people. Yet somehow or another I was able to be one of the few to pass it on my first try. For that, I truly feel blessed.

Visa

Until now, I have spent one month shy of two years of my life in Japan. As a foreigner looking to live here long term, one of the main concerns was obtaining a visa that enables me to do so. It's hard to plan for the future when one doesn't know if one can even stay in the country.

Japan's immigration system is quite unpredictable. Most of the information you get is hearsay. Everyone says something different. No clear and concrete guidelines seem to exist. Many say it just depends on the immigration officer that you get and what they had for breakfast that morning.

During my time here, I've had to file a lot of paperwork with these folks. When applying for a visa, I have never been given the amount of time I have requested. I've asked for a 6 month visa, and have been given 1 year. I've asked for a 1 year extension, and they only give me 6 months. Because I got a new job it was again time to apply for a new visa; this time for the long term. I requested 1 year, and immigration has given me a 3 year visa. So now, for the first time in two years, I can finally breathe easy as far as visas are concerned. Three years is a huge blessing.



Moving to Osaka

I am moving again! This time I'm going far away to a part of Japan called Kansai. This area is the 14th largest urban area in the world with about 17 million people. It includes the cities Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto. I'm moving to a small place right smack in the middle of these three large cities. Here I will be working as a teacher at a bilingual Christian school. I will be teaching English, science, and social studies. I will also most likely be helping out the church that is attached to this school.



Initially, I was unsure about moving away from Nagoya. I have fallen in love with this area and have many friends here. But after much prayer and consultation, I feel that this is definitely the path I am to take. I have always been attracted to this area of Japan. It was where I wanted to go in the first place. As the day of the big move is drawing closer and closer, I am getting excited. I can't wait to see what's in store for me in Osaka.

A New Home

Part of moving to a new city is I have to find a new casa to live in. I am currently on the hunt for a new house. I have one place available to me, but I've been told I can find a cheaper and bigger place if I'm willing to do the legwork (and I am). My main vision for this new home is for it to be a place where people from out of town can stay at when they come to visit. Whether they be from Japan or from overseas. This is something my family does in America. If possible I want to be able to do the same thing here in Japan, at least to a certain extent.

Conclusion

Thank you for reading this far, and thank you all for your prayer and support. I have come a long way, but have so much further to go here in Japan. In April, I will move into the next phase of what God has for me to do in this nation. I humbly request that you not let your prayers and support cease. Please pray for my transition to Osaka, and that it be smooth. That I find the right place to live in, and that all my needs will be provided for. Thank you.



Until next time,

Jacob.