



United States of America

Information

Language: English (de facto), Spanish widely spoken in southwest and Florida

Capital: Washington DC

Population: 303,893,000

Currency: American Dollar (\$)

(Average) [Rate!]

Current rating: 3.4/5 (32 votes)

Your rating:

Hitchability: Excellent Good Average Bad Almost impossible

Cancel

More Info:

Find a host through Be Welcome

For specific information on each state please check the links at the bottom of this page.



guaka site, wiktalk hitching in New England, taken by amylin, September 2007

The United States of America as a country is divided up into 50 states; for the convenience of the common hitchhiker these states are discussed in detail along with their capitals at the following pages (see below). The US is bordered by Canada to the North and Mexico to the South.

Hitching, like everything else in America, varies greatly depending on what type of area and what part of the country you are passing through. In general you can get rides fairly easily if you hitchhike the right way; in fact, often you can find more than just rides, such as offers for free meals, invitations to homes and parties, etc.

Relatively quite a few people in the United States are profoundly religious. People who pick you up might inquire about your religion. If you're not religious, try to deal with it in a positive way and accept the difference. More often you will be picked up by really cool people, and often dropped off exactly at the point of your destination, as hitchhiker Guaka's experience shows, for example. Detours for hitchhikers are much more common here than in Europe due to cheaper gas.

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Long vs. short distance

If you're going for speed over a long distance (3+ hours), then the best bet is to stay on the interstates (designated by "I-##") instead of local highways. Try to stick to on-ramps that have truck stops, rest stops or any other reason for drivers to stop there (restaurants, gas stations, etc.) You can also look for rides at the truck stops themselves, but be discreet about it as some a staff or customers are rather unfriendly to hitchers and will rudely ask you to leave their territory or call the police on you. As a rule Love's and Pilot truck stops will be the quickest to kick you out. Flying J truck stops are generally a lot more lenient towards hitchhikers. Getting dropped off on a low-traffic exit is the gravest danger when hitching on interstates where the police are unfriendly to standing where you're visible to the through traffic on the freeway. It can easily lead to long, long delays. Identify the last truck stop, major intersection (with a non-freeway), or rest area before your driver's destination, and get off there rather than risking getting stuck.

If you are only going a few hundred miles, you can often make better time on state or local roads. There are many more places to wait at, and there is much more potential traffic. Most of the traffic on the Interstate system won't be able to notice you while on the on-ramp. Even if you are going long distances, if you aren't concerned about making good time then getting off the interstates can be a very rewarding experience. Local highways and smaller roads will grant you a better picture of what local life is like in that area, and typically offer a greater variety of drivers and scenery.

Police/Laws

United_States_of_America

Even in states where hitchhiking is illegal, the law is rarely enforced. Wyoming Highway Patrol reports that in 2010, they approached 524 hitchhikers but only cited eight of them (note that hitchhiking is no longer illegal in Wyoming.)

If the police pass you walking or sitting by the side of the road without soliciting in any way, they may still stop to check IDs, but you are not required to identify yourself except if there is any way that you could have done something unlawful. As a result, the best method is to not use a sign or thumb whenever an oncoming car looks like a police cruiser. Often, particularly close to major cities, the police will ask you for photo ID, but as long as you have one with you (such as a passport) there shouldn't be a problem. Most of the time they will be polite when you come up clean, and not too rarely they'll give you a lift out of their area to get rid of you.

Especially in smaller towns and in the countryside, the officer stopping you is likely to never have seen a passport before. If that's your form of ID, bear with the delay caused, help the poor guy out by point out which is your name and your birth date and enjoy the confusion and the hilarious misconceptions that arise.

Tourists who intend to cross into the USA by hitchhiking should note that the US immigration department will log that you have been hitchhiking, should they discover that you are. This log will be visible to any guard who subsequently checks your immigration status, if you decide to leave and enter the USA again, it may make your entry back into the USA more difficult if it is not a hitchhiking friendly state (ie. Arizona, Idaho, Michigan).

Car License Plate

Every state issues its own specific car plates. For example, a car from Alabama will have be specifically Car license tagged as such. In some States, the license plate will also show the county of residence. This can be helpful if you spot a car that might be going in the same direction as you. It might also be helpful to write down the license plate number in case of foul play.

Food

Eat:

If you are friendly, people who pick you up will offer to buy you food quite a lot. Additionally, a lot of people will throw you some bucks to eat. From change up to \$100. An anonymous hitchhiker has been given \$100 dollars twice, and they have been given \$60 dollars several times as has Zenit... If you are looking for monetary gifts, the key is the right type of answer when they ask, concernedly, what you do to eat - "Naw, we're pretty much all right, we got *some* money." (emphasizing the "some" slightly)- if they've asked this question and you answer this way you'll basically always get a friendly handout - for which you should thank them profusely, of course. :)



Chael^{site} crossing a bridge in Oregon, August 2009

For vegetarians and especially for vegans traveling between cities, times can be hard. Zenit for one has sustained himself mostly on chips and granola bars for weeks at a time in the Mid West.

Once you open your mind to it, there are actually many opportunities for dumpster diving in urban areas. Port cities are especially good. Note, however that dumpster diving is in a similar sort of gray area as hitchhiking, with local legality depending on the particular state's laws, and the prevalent attitudes of local law enforcement officers.

Grocery stores are prime targets for food (Trader Joe's or Starbucks are especially likely to have an unlocked dumpster, and has lots of organics). Grocery stores cannot sell packaged foods past their expiration date, and so throw them away still wrapped in dumpsters behind the store.

Another great place to dive is food distribution centers. As they supply restaurants, their food comes in bulk and they throw out their food sometimes days before the expiration date. Google Maps can help you turn up locations. *Check Trashwiki for detailed information on dumpster diving in the United States.*

Drink: It is often possible to retrieve used cups from the trash at fast food restaurants with "free refill" policies and refill them. Otherwise, American water is just as free and healthy as any other country of the world.

Hitchhiking Books

Rather than a genre of its own, hitchhiking books probably fit better in a genre of alternative travel books, with Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*, Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods* and Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

To that list of fun and funny and moving and important books, we should add Colin Flaherty's *Redwood to Deadwood*, a 53-year old dude hitchhikes across America. Again.

Redwood to Deadwood describes Flaherty's hitchhiking trip across America.

"Before I tucked my thumb in for the final time, I'd run with wild horses. Visit a pot farm. Hunt big game. Poach big game. Get by a police helicopter. Get into family feuds. Ride in cop cars. Reconnect with old friends. Make new ones. Get tired and exhilarated. Lost and found. Kicked out and invited in."

"I know how to cook muskrat, squirrel and rockchuck. And oh yea, I almost got killed.?"

Book reviewer Janet Jay said the book is [?the best hitchhiking I have ever read or even heard about. My friend heard about it when she was sitting next to a guy on an airplane who was reading it. He was laughing out loud. So she asked about it. He said that was how he heard about it too. So books hitchhike as well as people.?]]

Personal Experiences

Haven't hitched extensively there, but where I have, the experiences have been unique. I've hitched Oregon to Mexico along the famous highway 101. I also hitched from Oregon to Chicago on i90 in the dead of winter. Lots of clothes for that one, and a warm place to retreat to at every stop. The most remarkable thing about hitching in the States is that you get picked up by REALLY interesting people. Not all the time. But our beloved weirdos are more common in the US than anywhere else I've hitched. Regardless of what you think about the States, it's easily one of the most interesting places to hitchhike, especially if you LIKE adventure. - Chael

*I have hitchhiked over 30,000 miles in the United States, and while I have nothing to compare it to other than Canada, I would say in general that hitchhiking in the United States is easy and fun. Each state varies greatly in geography and ease of hitchhiking. My personal favorite states are Colorado, California, and West Virginia.
Thewindandrain (talk) 04:42, 28 October 2012 (CET)*

Links

- [1]
- {<http://www.RedwoodtoDeadwoodbook.com>}



States of the USA

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