

Where_to_hitchhike

A good **hitchhiking spot** makes hitchhiking safer and easier. Finding a good spot might be tricky, and sometimes knowing the area is an advantage. If you know your route, you might check the best places on this wiki or from the internet, including Google Maps, before heading to the road.

There are some generic hitchhiking places, like petrol stations, bus stops etc. This page attempts to provide an understanding about where you should hitchhike.

See also the article on how to pick up hitchhikers.

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Bus stops

Bus stops are in some cases the only place to hitchhike legally. This is the case when a driver drops you off in a cross-section of a motorway.

Pros

- It is a safe place to stand.
- It is a safe place for the drivers to stop.
- It is often a dry place in case of wet weather.

Cons

- The drivers might think you are waiting for a bus. You can avoid this by using a big sign.
- In poorer countries those who stop might want money for the ride.

Petrol stations



A monk from the Holy Hitch-hiking Order near Arles, France.

Petrol stations are good places to ask for a ride, especially while hitchhiking along a motorway.

Pros

- Almost always a safe and dry place.
- Often marked on maps, and sometimes mentioned on sign posts well in advance, so more forward planning is possible.
- People who stop there might go very far.
 - ◆ Higher chance of meeting truck drivers, known for traveling the farthest distances.
- You can and should ask for a ride from drivers.
 - ◆ Be friendly, and always say thanks and so on, even if the driver is going the right direction but doesn't want to take you. If you get annoyed because someone says no, the next person you ask will notice your annoyance and will be less eager to take you.
- Thumbing is easy, as the cars drive slowly.
- Possibly warm.
- Sometimes a convenient (but often expensive) source of (usually bad) food, drinks, maps and toilets.

Cons

- People who stop there might be local and not go very far.
- You miss the cars passing the station.
- Often difficult to access from city centers at the beginning of your journey, so can be bad starting points.

On ramps



Workshop during the [888](#)-event on where to hitchhike from in [Paris](#)

On ramps to freeways and interstates are prime realty as long as the driver has room to pull over. A good spot to stand usually is beside the *no pedestrians* sign.

Make sure that there is lots of room for a car to pull over **safely** and still allow other cars to pass. A shoulder large enough to safely park a truck is best. It is becoming easier to locate a safe spot by looking at [Google Maps](#) or Google Earth before you depart. Google Maps Streetview can be especially useful, in locations where it is available.

In many places in the United States, on ramps are the **only** legal option for places to thumb. This includes the entire state of Tennessee. In most countries in Europe you can legally hitch on a slip-road leading onto the motorway, **as long as you stand in front of the motorway sign.**

Toll Booths / Péages

In some countries the motorways or a part of them are toll roads, so the places where drivers stop to pay might be very good spots to get a ride, since all the traffic going your direction can see you. Other type of toll booths is only stopping the traffic joining/leaving the motorway on one particular exit, there the traffic will be much more weak.

Pros

- All the through traffic on the motorway slows down and stops.
- In most cases there is a good visibility and room to pull over.

Cons

- On roads with heavy traffic they are very huge and only the cars from the first lanes can see you (for example on the motorways leaving [Paris](#))
- It might be forbidden for pedestrians (and consequently for hitchers). The way it is enforced (or not enforced) vary greatly though, depending on the country you're in, and even within the same country

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depending on the network you're on and your particular luck that day. Sometimes the motorway staff can call the police if they see you, other times police passes by and doesn't care.

Truck Stops

Flying J, Pilot, TA and other truck stops can be good hitching spots. Truck stops, like petrol stops are frequented by more than just trucks. This is a good place to get picked up by young folks who are traveling across the country on summer vacation, or by the older crowd who are on a long trip by themselves.

Pros

- Truckers often go long distances
- Truck stops often have cheap food, a lounging area, showers, internet, and restrooms
- Truckers often give you cash or food when they can't offer a ride

Cons

- Generally it is against truck stop policy (though not always enforced) to allow soliciting, including for rides
- It is against the policy for trucking companies in certain countries to have riders because of insurance reasons

Outside of town

Before or after a town is a good place to hitch. Usually where the speed limit changes or main area of businesses and housing ends.

Anywhere cars can pull over safely

- huge parking spaces

Nine times out of ten you can get a ride anywhere there is a parking lot;(i.e. park and ride).

Traffic lights

Traffic light are pretty good spots. All the cars are standing still so you can easily make eye contact with the drivers and signal you want a ride.

Sometimes it's harder for cars to pull over, especially if there is a lot of traffic. Try to get an idea of where cars might be able to pull over safely. Traffic lights right before a highway entrance, which often have a large space on the side of the road, can be good spots as they combine the time drivers spend at the lights with the safety of a large space to stop for you. If you're unfamiliar with the area, try to find a place like this using Google Maps or Google Earth before you depart.

On the road

The countryside, especially where traffic speed is lower than about 60 km/h, can be a good place for hitching.

Cons

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Traffic on minor roads on the countryside can offer great rides to get to the nearest bigger city, or onto the main infrastructure.

Often on bigger roads the slow, local traffic coming from smaller sideroads may provide excellent rides, and it is quite often quite easy to flag those drivers down, as a very personal and direct approach is often possible.

Even national roads (non-motorway) often provide good space along the main flow of traffic, as there are often emergency lanes or so called Mehrzweckstreifen.

Finally, hitchhiking on emergency lanes of motorways can be an option in case of traffic jams. In such situation using a cardboard sign is usually highly effective. It is necessary though to take maximum safety precautions (we suppose you are smart enough to take these precautions), and you should know that hitchhiking on motorways is basically forbidden in most Western countries.

Asking locals about good hitchhiking spots

Asking local people about the best spots to hitchhike from in the area is a great way to save time. They may even give you a lift themselves. Ask them about the generic hitchhiking places mentioned above, and ask them where they have seen any hitchhikers before. Although what they say is not always useful or even truthful, asking several locals and comparing their advice will give you a good impression of the layout of the area.

Leaving the vehicle

When leaving the vehicle, if you are planning to look for another ride immediately after, then make sure you are on or near a hitchhiking spot when you say goodbye to the driver. Try to choose the spot yourself by looking out of the vehicle window - despite their efforts to help, drivers are often very ignorant about what makes a useful hitchhiking spot and their advice can range from brilliant to terrible. Often it's not worth taking the risk.

It is easy to lose hours by making mistakes such as standing on the wrong road, or the wrong side of the road. Make sure you know which road you want to be on, and keep checking the road signs so that you know where you are on your map and where you will leave the vehicle. This is especially important when traveling across cities.