



Tips from past hitchers...



THIS ADVICE HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM PREVIOUS HITCHERS' EXPERIENCES. LINK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS IN NO WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY HITCHER FOLLOWING

1. Hitching

- "Emphasising it's a CHARITY hitch helps you get lifts"
- "Think about where you stand to wait for your lifts - remember the cars/ trucks have to see you in time to stop + be able to pull in safely"; "Good spots are after a turn-off or roundabout junction"
- "A great way to meet other back-packers; it helped me gain confidence about travelling"
- "Try to get dropped off at truck stops - the best places to find ongoing lifts (+ a decent cheap meal!); "once you get on the truckers trail, you're sorted!"
- "There's nothing wrong with doing it slowly, provided your team agree. We loved it - the Hitch was half of the holiday!"
- "Try to keep smiling + cheerful, it always helps; look drivers in the eye"
- "Look out for 'John Mann' lorries which go to the south of Spain!"; "John Mann trucks are blue with a red stripe on the top, go on the night ferry, + are usually bound for Fez"
- "'Continental Express' lorries go from London to Gibraltar which is a short journey to Algeiras"
- "Pant-wettingly funky"
- **"Drivers from Calais tend to go North or East, not South"**
- "Cheapest way to see the world"
- **"Hitching in a 3 is really fun, but considerably slower as you may find it harder to get trucks to take you"**
- "Make sure you make it clear on your sign that you are English and on a Charity Hitch - this will definitely encourage British truckers on the Continent to pick you up"
- "A lot of British trucks going to Spain leave on Monday so they can get back by the weekend"
- **"The truck drivers were fantastically friendly - often going right off their route to help us on our way"**
- "You get longer lifts on bigger roads, so stay on main routes"
- "London traffic tends to take the Dover crossing"
- "The M25 and any major ring road is very difficult to get around, so it is often better to try and wait for a lift that can get you all the way round rather than just part of the way"
- "Big signs, ask people on the ferry, be genuine + talk lots. Listen to what the truckers tell you - they generally know places / people that are good"
- **"Don't pack too much"**
- **"If you end up on the east coast of Spain, take the Almeria crossing (would have saved us 2 days)"**
- "Make sure you get on with your hitch partner before you leave!"
- "Wear crazy clothes, smile lots, make nice signs"
- "Talk to drivers while you're waiting at the UK ferry port - find out which companies go all the way to Morocco/Prague!"
- **"Avoid town centres"**
- "Really muck about when hitching (we found kneeling + clasping our hands worked), - you'll seem more 'entertaining to the drivers'; "Lots of boogying on motorway slip roads"; **"We found that signs saying 'Good with children and animals' and 'Just married!' was a great gimmick!"**
- "Location is EVERYTHING! If you don't get picked up after an hour (max.), then you're in a bad site. If at all possible, move somewhere else + try again."
- **"Don't be worried about lack of Spanish/French - a few basic sentences will get you by"**
- "Don't be too rigid in what route you take"
- **"Don't get caught in France or Northern Spain on a Sunday - no lorries allowed"**
- **"Don't set off for Morocco just before Easter weekend, Spain practically shuts down during this time!"**

Average number of lifts to reach Morocco in 2007: 16

- “The drivers were SO friendly - one woman showed us round Burgos, bought us lunch + beers, and found us somewhere to stay in Madrid!”
- “Approach drivers at petrol pumps - it's hard for them to refuse”
- “It's a brilliant experience and tells everyone what a rugged dude you are!”
- “DO NOT miss the trucks coming off the ferry (if you haven't made it to the trucker's lounge) - they're your best bet”
- “Don't hitch on French Route Nationales - hitch at the parking to the Peage or in service stations”
- “Try and contact trucking companies before you go to ascertain their routes”
- “Practise French and Spanish - particularly explaining that you are doing the Hitch for Charity”
- **“During Holy Week and on Palm Sunday, we found it impossible to get lifts as there were no cars about”**
- “Wait at the ferry port in France/Belgium to get a decent long-distance trucky lift rather than getting into the first short lift into town that comes”
- **“Make sure everyone drops you at service stations”**
- “Don't be nervous about walking into a service station bar / restaurant + asking for lifts”
- “Cash travellers cheques when you have the chance, so you have a bit of change on you at all times”
- “An amazing experience that cannot be repeated any other way”
- “Good time guaranteed - plenty of funny tales to tell!”
- **“Try to look normal! They won't pick you up if you look like a tramp.”**

2. Ferries

- Have some idea of the schedule of ferries leaving England before you go - “we had a 7 hour wait at Portsmouth + would have got dropped in town had we known”
- “Do it. Swimming isn't fun!”
- “Get a day return ticket - it's often much cheaper than a single even though you are not using half of it”
- **“Head straight for the bar/truckers lounge and network massively!”**
- “Don't wait around if you can't get on for free - get a foot passenger ticket, they're not expensive”
- “If you are going to Morocco, try and get to Portsmouth, otherwise you'll spend days trying to get across northern France”
- “Both crossings were very straightforward + the prices are more-or-less all the same, so don't bother shopping around in Algeciras”
- **“Do the channel overnight to grab some sleep; Calais and the Belgium ports are good for eastern Europe, but Le Havre/ Cherbourg are better for Morocco”**
- “The Portsmouth - Bilbao (Spain) crossing will cut out all of France but it is a notoriously rough crossing and not half as fun as hitching”
- “Don't go to Gibraltar - there are only 3 ferries a week to Morocco!”
- “Talk to truck drivers at the ferry port (“in the bar!”) + ask them which crossing to take”
- **“As soon as you're on the boat, go to the truckers' lounge + ask around; you are very likely to find someone going at least to Spain if not Morocco itself”**
- **“It's an amazing sense of achievement when you make it all the way to Morocco - makes you realise just what you can do!”**

3. Where to go in Morocco

- “Decide what you want to do early, otherwise the time just passes quite happily but you've missed the desert + mountains”
- “Cascades of Ouzourd - beautiful”
- “Chefchaouen is a great place to relax after the Hitch”
- “Essouira - gorgeous; completely different from the rest of Morocco”
- “My favourite place was the Todra Gorge (go to Tinerhir + get a taxi) - extremely cheap hotels, very relaxing in incredible scenery”
- “Fez - relaxing place to start, amazing medina”
- “Rissani, out in the Sahara, is officially the nicest and friendliest place on the planet. Time stands still there and when you are sat in rainy England revising for exams you'll give anything to be back there.”
- “Azrou (near Fez) - great for cedarwood pieces”
- “The Imperial Cities - they're a different planet”
- “The Desert - you'll never forget watching the sun rise - it makes you glad to be alive”

- “The Sahara at Merzouga - never experienced anything like it in my life!”; “Merzouga in the South - friendly nomads, cheap living + lots of sun & sand!”
- “If you have time, it’s worth looking round Tangier instead of just passing through. It has a very lively market + medina, and you’ll get in some excellent experience of dealing with prices, guides etc... It can be a bit hectic, but not quite as bad as people say. Just remember you don’t have to agree to anything - that’s probably the best tactic”
- “Casablanca is worth it to see the Hassan II Mosque - otherwise, stay away!”
- “Marrakesh - everything you expect + lots more; hammams + henna tattoos are particularly recommended”
- “The house of Amir Boukar (?) in a village called Tinchir in the south - he’s a mad Rastafarian Berber”
- “The Djema El Fna in Marrakesh at night - its alive!”
- “Do Meknes last, if at all, as you will probably pass through it a couple of times anyway to get to other places (do check out the central square though!). Fes is more interesting, although large + confusing. The Merenid tombs are a nice respite from the city + have great views”
- “The South in general is great - the people are really friendly + hospitable”
- “Todra Gorge by bike on a nice day - beautifully breath-taking!”
- “Middle Atlas (Azrou) - friendly + hospitable - lovely hiking but not too strenuous”
- “Marrakesh - amazing mix of cultures”
- “Sands dunes of Merzouga + Draa valley”
- “Go south as far as you can, especially over the mountains + into the desert”
- “A steaming bath at the local hammam - quite an intimate experience.”
- “Don’t be fooled by Moroccan’s who tell you about mixed Hammams, they don’t exist”
- “Meknes - a beautiful city, far less touristy so little or no hassle.”
- “Try the Moroccan cuisine it’s delicious, my favourite was Kefta which you can get by the roadside on long journeys”

4. Travelling in Morocco

- “Try to see a wide range of places - its a really diverse country”
- “Try not to arrive in Tangiers at night”
- **“Expect lots of hassle at Tangiers. Just ignore it”**
- “Be confident “
- “Be prepared with a few Arabic phrases, 'Shukran' means thank you and is most appreciated”
- “Take lots of toilet paper!”
- “Take a big rucksack -lots to buy!”
- “Trains are very good + v.v. cheap. Grands taxis are also cheap”
- “The CTM bus network is comfortable and efficient but the local buses are cheaper and more fun”
- “Ignore timetables; GMT = General Moroccan Time”
- **“Try not to be suspicious of everyone - there are some cool people around”**
- **“Some Moroccans have devised elaborate methods of making money out of tourists. Sometimes they will catch you, sometimes not. You can either treat it as a game + it can be a laugh, or not, in which case it can be frustrating!”**
- **“Be wary of people who approach you in obvious touristy areas eg. docks, train station. But most people were great - best place to meet people seems to be on trains, buses, taxis etc... “**
- “Respect their culture”
- “If you are a shopaholic take your credit card or don’t as the case may be”
- “Don’t be afraid to stay in the really cheap places - they often have more character”
- “Check out prices/ currency exchange rates before going - you’ll avoid being screwed for loads of money on the first day!”
- **“Don’t be worried by people’s hospitality - it’s when you trust people that you meet some absolute ‘gems’”**
- **“Girls should cover legs + arms, but as long as you look confident + know what you’re doing (or seem to), you’re unlikely to attract hassle”**
- “Relax and ignore the hassle (they’re not all after your money)”
- “It gets very cold at night, especially in the desert, so bring extra jumpers and a warm sleeping bag.”
- “Earplugs would be ideal to avoid waking up to the call to prayer at dawn.”
- “Aim for night trains to avoid wasting time; pay for a berth (get top bunk if poss.)”
- “If you travel across the Atlas Mountains at night wrap up warm and take a sleeping bag because it’s really cold.”
- “Read about carpet shops + visit at least two before buying anything”
- “Eat traditional - its cheaper + tastier (but don’t gobble too many green olives -runs!)”

- “Be careful (but not paranoid) with your baggage”
- “The bus travel will be tedious.”
- “Getting cash is very difficult in Fes.”
- **“Be aware of festive days, as this affects transport.”**
- “Get first class tickets on overnight train from Fez - Marrakesh - definitely worth it!”
- “Be prepared to haggle for taxi fares; if you’re in one of the more isolated places, be prepared to be ripped off!”; “Find out from a local what the price of a journey SHOULD be, before agreeing a fare”
- “Keep your hands over your pockets in Tangiers”
- “Pack a decent camera - amazing photo opportunities!”
- “It’s a country of great colour + contrast. An enriching experience”

5. Return Travel

- “If I did it again, I would hitch back; once at Tangiers ferry port, pick an English truck + convince the driver he wants to take you - easy!”
- **“Book early for cheap flights”**
- “Its much cheaper to go to Spain + get a stand-by flight than get one straight from Morocco”
- **“Eurolines coaches go from Fez and Tangiers all the way to Victoria Station but it takes 48 hours”**
- “I hitched/ bussed/ trained through Spain + flew from Barcelona (£54) - wicked!”
- “‘Air France’ and ‘Royal Air Maroc’ have the most flights out of Morocco”
- **“You can’t get stand-by flights from Prague, and last minute tickets are expensive, book in advance if you can, but make sure you have a partner sorted and are definitely setting off when you plan to!”**
- **“You can get an overnight coach from Prague to Victoria, London. Not that comfortable, but pretty cheap!”**

6. Fundraising

- Be persistent - its a pretty unusual sponsored event - if this won’t make people part with their money, nothing will!
- “Ask you landlord/lady - I got £100”
- “Arrange a scheme whereby people who sponsor you guess how long it will take you to reach Morocco/Prague - the closest estimate wins some prize”
- “Recruit parents + friends to ask their contacts”; **“I bugged people at my Dad’s work - they have money which students just don’t”**
- “My old school did a disco and donated the proceeds for my sponsorship”
- “Carry on when you get back - it sometimes easier after the event”
- **“Bucket collections in bars sorted me out!”**
- “Said I’d cut my hair off + everyone paid me loads (including the barber!)”
- **“Going into a lecture late in boxers - everyone threw their money at me!”**
- “Apply for money from college JCR charities fund - they’re looking for charities to give it away to”
- “Organise an event at a local nightclub with a Moroccan/Czech theme and sell tickets to all the hitchers and their friends. It’s a great way to raise money and have fun”
- “Collections in bars are great fun and fancy dress works a treat”
- “My local Barber sponsored me £20 because I was a loyal customer!”
- “The university bursar usually has a discretionary fund it’s always worth applying for some of it”
- “My parents were so impressed I was actually doing something with my life that they raised over £150 at their work places”

“Not only does this event raise much-needed funds for educational development in southern Africa, but it also serves to educate a new generation in the pleasures and difficulties of exploring the wider world in which we live.”

Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Morocco Hitch Patron

Hitch Sponsors

