



## **Hannah Summers – My Hitch memories**

Now that I'm nearing the ripe old age of 23, with the memories of student discounts fading in the mist, the time has come to reflect on my Hitch from a more 'mature' perspective...

That's not to say the fun times have been forgotten...setting out from Newcastle on that sunny day in March I don't think I had quite expected how much I would be laughing over the next few days. The Hitch was one of the funniest experiences I have had to date. 19 lifts, 4 countries, 30 coffees, 78 rice cakes and 4 maps later (yes, you can lose 4 maps in 36 hours), the Hitch was a ball from start to finish.

Granted, this is partly due to the chilled nature of my Hitch buddy, but also due to the challenge of the Hitch and the incredible people we met along the way...To those wide boys in your lowered Golf GTI, we thank you for scraping your car suspension along the M1 for three junctions...To Dave, our penthouse owning lorry driver, we thank you for the night's kip and a speedy warm journey to Bordeaux...To all those boozed up, French rugby supporters, we do not thank you for stinking out the P & O ferry passenger lounge with boiled ham, strong cheese and....fart.

There will be highs and lows, but the lows will only make the high bits better. The relief and gratitude you can feel towards a person for picking you up after a stint of thumbing is a feeling I can't quite describe! It will be a pleasant surprise to realise how much people are willing to go out of their way to help you on yours....

So in terms of advice, I would say get some basic phrases under your belt - learn the phrase in Spanish/French for "where are you going?". Sounds simple, to us it wasn't. Don't ask people "where are you living?" (I did), or "when are we going!?!?!?" (I did). These are great conversation starters once you have secured your lift, but not the best way to get a lift invite – you just look odd. And maybe a bit stupid!

Remember also a lot of long distance lorry drivers will pick you up as a bit of company for their journey...impress them with your language skills, but not so much that they think they will get no peace and quiet for the rest of their trip!

These lorries are also people's homes for a long while, so respect that and try and look as clean as possible!!! We were quite often offered lifts over other Hitchers because we didn't look like we had rolled around in a muddy field, and tried to avoid being drenched from head to foot (some groups appeared to have swam across the Channel).

So how can the Hitch benefit you aside from a fantastic few days? Don't underestimate the enormity of the challenge in other people's eyes – taking part in a Hitch of this scale shows huge independence, initiative and courage! People don't just look at your fundraising efforts as impressive, but also your ability to get somewhere and make it happen!

In an economic climate that has seen better days, these extras on your CV not only help separate you from the crowd, but highlight organisational skills and the ability to work off your own back as well. Employers have not ceased to be impressed with my Hitch challenge, and I know my Hitch partner often uses experiences from our trip to help support his answers in his lovely corporate interviews (if that's what floats your boat.)

So as well as having fun, the Hitch is most definitely something to show off about, and an experience quite unlike any other! Enjoy!!