

HitchBOT - The World's First Hitchhiking Robot Completes Cross Country Journey

Even though most hitchhikers are generally people truly in need of assistance, drivers have a tendency to ignore them because they are cautious about letting a stranger in their car.

Two Canadian professors, David Harris Smith and Frauke Zeller, wondered what drivers would do if they encountered a hitchhiking robot. Would the drivers be considerate enough to give it a ride to its desired destination or would they just vandalize and chuck the unprotected machine into a ditch?



The two professors were researching relationship between humans and technology. They came up with the quirky idea of building a hitchhiking robot that would hitch rides from random drivers all the way across Canada. Its journey would take it across Canada's vast and varied landscape and cover a distance of some 6,000 km (3,700 miles). From Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Victoria, British Columbia.

Their robot was named HitchBOT and it was built with cheap household items such as a bucket for its torso, pool noodles for arms and legs, and an LED panel for the face. HitchBOT was dressed in bright yellow rain boots and gloves and was quite odd looking but cute in its own unique way.

HitchBOT was totally immobile and consequently was wholly reliant on humans when it came to getting in and out of vehicles.

The robot did have some technology to help it on its adventure. HitchBOT had a PC tablet, GPS tracker, and a camera. Thanks to some ingenious programming, HitchBOT was able to answer general questions and keep drivers entertained with small talk. Thanks to a Wikipedia download, the clever robot was even able to cite interesting facts about the areas they were passing through. All the while HitchBOT tweeted pictures to the public as it made its way across Canada.

HitchBOT was unable to explain the best place to be dropped off. HitchBOT 's creators depended on the humans to show some kindness and consideration. They had no control over this factor, so they simply crossed their fingers and hoped for the best.

Needless to say, most people involved with the experiment didn't believe HitchBOT would make it across Canada. The skeptics believed the cute robot would be vandalized, stolen, hidden in a forest or just destroyed on the side of the road. To them, HitchBOT 's future seemed pretty bleak.

You'll be happy to know that the skeptics were completely wrong! The cute little guy was first picked up in Halifax on July 27th and made it to his destination, Victoria, on August 21st.

HitchBOT had an amazing adventure! It visited national parks, went fishing, camping and even attended a Native American pow wow. One kind driver took HitchBOT to a wedding. While at the wedding, the little robot had its first dance and interrupted the bride's speech by blurting out 'I like to make friends'. And judging by his Twitter followers and Facebook friend count, HitchBOT sure made plenty!

In addition to helping him complete his journey, his Canadian friends went the extra mile to make certain HitchBOT was safe and well taken care of. From rainy day rain capes to doses of oil to making sure HitchBOT stayed together by adding some metal screws - strangers from across Canada helped the robot make it safely back to its creators!