

# Hitchhiking robot reaches journey's end in Canada

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Hitchbot, the chatty robot with an LED-lit smiley face sent hitchhiking across Canada this summer as part of a social experiment, Toronto, Canada on July 31, 2014

A chatty robot with an LED-lit smiley face sent hitchhiking across Canada this summer as part of a social experiment reached its final destination Thursday after several thousand kilometers on the road.

HitchBot, assembled from household odds and ends by university professors Frauke Zeller and David Smith, was to reunite with its creators at an art gallery in Victoria, British Columbia having crossed more than 6,000 kilometers (3,700 miles).

The pair devised the trip hoping it would provide insights into societal views of robots.

"This project turns our fear of technology on its head and asks, 'Can robots trust humans?'" Zeller told AFP in late July when HitchBot's trip began.

With a head encased in a transparent cake saver, set atop a plastic beer pail wrapped in a solar panel, and swimming pool floats for limbs, the automaton was designed to be fully dependent on people.

"Our aim is to further discussion in society about our relationship with technology and robots," said Zeller.

HitchBot began its trip on July 27 in Canada's Atlantic port city of Halifax, after being picked up by an elderly couple in a camper van.

Images and messages posted on Twitter showed the robot thereafter with its rubber boots and yellow latex gloves being driven westward across forests, mountains and prairies, making stops to fish and camp, attend a wedding and a native pow wow—a traditional aboriginal celebration.

Its journey, courtesy of a host of strangers, has inspired art, clothing and a knock-off made of cardboard and string—affectionately dubbed HitchBox.

To celebrate the end of its odyssey, a party will be held at the Open Space gallery, which supports experimental art.

Researchers were to analyze comments posted on social media to see what they can surmise about the public's attitudes concerning robot-human interactions.

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