

Living with Electric Vehicles

JOHN DAVIS: On any given weekend, somewhere you'll find a gathering of cars and a group of enthusiasts assembled around them. Be the hotrods classics or sports cars, each genre of the car's evolution has developed loyal following. And electric cars are no exception. The recent National Plug-in day included events held at hundreds of sites across the U.S. enticing EV aficionados to check out the latest models and share their passion for gas-free motoring.

JOHN BARRACCA: The dealer gives you 9.3 gallons. I haven't used all of that yet. But, when I get 3 gallons low, I put 3 gallons in. So, I'm still at almost a full tank. The last time I put 3 gallons in was February and this is September 23rd.

JOHN DAVIS: All of the owners we talked with were pleased with their plug-in car's fuel economy and many routinely exceed government fuel economy estimates. Of course, using zero gasoline is an ultimate goal for the environment and the bottom line.

BILL CLARKE: The money that I'm paying for electricity is about a third the price of gasoline.

JOHN DAVIS: For some owning an extended-range EV like the Chevy Volt means not having to compromise their daily routine.

PAUL MICHALSKI: I like the game of it. It encourages you to get as much out of the battery as possible. If I play that game, but I also drive it like a car. And if I don't have time to do that, I don't.

JOHN DAVIS: Others appreciate the electrical motor's performance as much as its economy.

RANDY KUNING: It fun when I do this parking lot's grand prix next to a corvette. Now, OK. I'm not going to beat him past 30 miles per hour on acceleration. And most the time I just catch them napping anyway. (Laughter) So there is this is sense of their seeing the Volt nameplate on the rear panel disappearing in the distance.

MIKE NATALE: And people don't understand that they are fun to drive. They are responsive to the accelerator and most of them are good size cars and handle well. **JOHN:** College professor Jonathan Slade and his wife took the plunge to a full-electric Nissan Leaf and found it has induced some positive lifestyle changes.

JOHN SLADE: It really re-wires your brain in some interesting ways if you actually let it. Before we had a fully electric vehicle we used to end up stopping in convenience stores on the way to and from work to buy a lot of groceries like a gallon milk or loaf of bread or butter, whatnot. Of course that's like the least efficient way to buy it. At a grocery store near where I work that has

free electric charging stations, we plug in there and we end up doing our shopping for an entire week or 2 weeks there. We get better prices and we're charging for free using 30 to 50 cents of electricity in parking lot while we're in the store buying groceries. Everybody talks about range anxiety and they're all concerned about it. Our solution to that is to drive the heck out of the car. The more you drive the car the less range anxiety you have. And so, yeah, you drive somewhere once or twice with a full charge - Hey I can make it there and back - and you don't think about it anymore.

JOHN DAVIS: The Slade's even used their summer vacation this year to push their gas-free driving boundary.

JOHN SLADE: And so, I convinced my wife to take our summer vacation to actually attempt to drive all the way across the state of Maryland - in the western-most mountains all the way to Ocean City. We drove the heck out of the car and we drove it across the state. We would literally pull in and plug in and then go to a diner nearby, go to a restaurant, eat, do a little tourism, go to museums while it was charging, and come back and we would go. So there was very little, sort of like, waiting around for it to charge. We had to be kinda strategic to figure out where to plug in to figure out where there something to do for 2-3 hours.

JOHN DAVIS: Opinions are split on whether pure electrics, range extenders, or plug-in hybrids will be the preferred EV platform to help drive us into a petroleum-free future. Our guess is that all 3 types will find favor depending on their owner's needs. But it's clear that plugging in is charging up a new era of auto enthusiasm.