

Christmas Letter 2015



I travelled to Seattle for a **Rick Steves Reunion** in January, where I met a couple of my tour group who were on my *21 Days Best of Europe* tour (Sep 2014). I also met our tour guide Jennifer and our driver Sylvain, which was a special treat! This was my **first road trip in my Tesla Model S**, and the first time using Tesla's



SuperCharger network. I saw the *Museum of Flight's* superb collection of historical aircraft: JFK's Air Force One presidential jet (the first jet), a British Airways Concorde, and a mockup of the Space Shuttle.

My small group tour to the **United Arab Emirates and Oman in Arabia** for three weeks in February took us to see some wonderful sights in both countries. We flew in and out of Dubai in the U.A.E., splitting a week in that country, and spending two weeks exploring Oman. A professional photographer lead the tour, so we had lots of photo opportunities, and plenty of time to setup shots, as well as time to ourselves. We met some wonderful, friendly people, saw some outstanding cultural and religious locales, experienced *over-the-top Dubai*, and explored the more remote parts of both countries. I had a great time!



I attended **two summer star parties** held on southern Vancouver Island again this year - the *RASCals Star Party* (near Victoria), and the *Island Star Party* (Bright Angel Park, Cowichan Valley). I always enjoy the camaraderie of my fellow amateur astronomers, and I managed to take some nice photos of the night sky and do some observing from the dark sites the star parties give us access to.

My classmates and I had a great time at our **Cowichan Senior Secondary School's 45th Reunion**, held in the Cowichan Valley this summer. It was nice to reconnect with everyone, and we all appreciated *The Culprits* – a rock and roll band who knows the music we all appreciate - the same generation as us!

We had beautiful clear weather for a **Total Lunar Eclipse** in September. It was a gorgeous Sunday evening when I setup my camera gear at Cattle Point here in Victoria, and photographed and observed the eclipsed Moon as it rose over the Strait of Juan de Fuca (the Salish Sea). There were thousands of people at various locations around Victoria all observing the eclipse.





Later in September, I took my **Tesla Model S** (electric car) to Vancouver for its first annual service. I made a mini-holiday out of the trip, staying two nights so I could visit with some friends and relatives while on the mainland. My Model S continues to amaze me every time I drive it, it is so quiet, powerful, inexpensive to run, exotic, and a techie's dream! I have become a bit of an evangelist for electric vehicles (EVs)

since owning my Tesla. I am a member of two EV groups, and participate in some of their public outreach events.

I went a bit crazy this year with high tech gear, purchasing both an **Apple Watch** and an **Apple iPhone 6S Plus**. The watch is an extension of the iPhone, giving notifications of what's happening on the iPhone, and I can even pick up a call on the phone and use it Dick Tracy style! The watch will notify me when my Tesla Model S has completed charging! The Apple iPhone 6S Plus is the bigger-screened version, which I find much easier to read, easier to use, and photos and videos have amazing detail. I purchased it unlocked directly from Apple, so it will also save me from paying roaming charges when I travel, since I will now use local SIMs.

Our Jack Russell Terriers **Rolly and Tanner** are now four years old, but both continue to take life at full speed. It brings smiles to the faces of passersby when I have them out in the front yard, and they act like crazy dogs for all to see. Our cats **Mello and Coda** are the exact opposite, preferring to sleep curled up on the couch for most of the day - very lazy boys!



Kirk and I continue to enjoy pretty good health. We take the dogs for walks in the regional parks and beaches, so we get our daily exercise and appreciate our wonderful natural setting on southern Vancouver Island. I sometimes grouse about our cool/cold damp weather in the non-summer months, but we really have it pretty good, all things considered. My friends and I patronize the local pubs, restaurants, and coffee shops, which gives me a good social outlet and keeps all of us in touch with each other.

Merry Christmas to all and we hope you have a great New Year!
Joe and Kirk
Rolly and Tanner, Mello and Coda.

To read an expanded version of this Christmas Letter, and see more photos, videos and links, please browse my personal website: <http://joecarr.ca/xmas-2015/>

