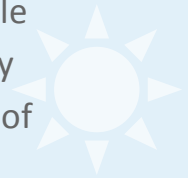


# Christmas 2014

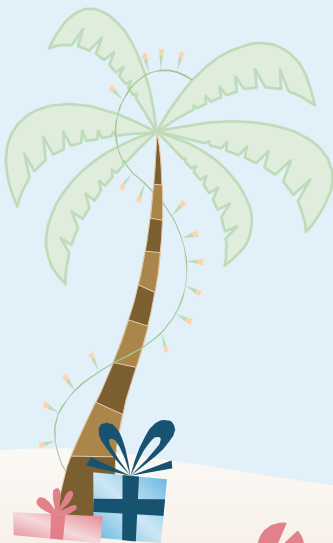
Joe Carr

In February and March of this year, I sailed aboard Holland America's *ms Statendam* on a month long cruise from San Diego, California to Hawaii, Fanning Island, French Polynesia, and returned to San Diego. This fulfilled a promise I made to myself way back in 1978 when I first visited French Polynesia to return some day. It was wonderful to cruise in the warm tropical waters of the South Pacific, and I experienced so many beautiful cultures along the way. I met several people on board who have taken this cruise more than once...they like it so much! The ship and her crew were nothing short of amazing, and the food & activities aboard exceeded my expectations. <http://photos.joetourist.ca/hawaiipolynesia>



We decided to sell our motor home this Spring since we only used the motor home four times last year. I placed the unit for sale with the same dealer I purchased it from, and they sold it within a week! We had a good run with the motor home; enjoying six years of traveling and camping.

Ever since Tesla announced the Model S, I have been fascinated with this all-electric car. I finally decided to take a test drive in Vancouver in early May. At that point, the car really got under my skin, since I was very much impressed with the test drive. I talked myself out of the purchase twice, but eventually decided to go for my dream car. I placed the order in late May, and took delivery in late



September. As I write this in December, my Model S has just over 2,000 kms on it.

I have to say, the Model S has made driving fun again. The instant acceleration and superb handling is a real treat. The silence in the cabin and amazing amount of space is great. The running costs are super low compared with my previous gas-engined cars (3 cents/km for the Model S, versus 18 cents/km for my previous Honda Accord). Also, the Model S is a geek's dream come true with all the high tech features. I've given most of my friends test rides, so we're having fun! Photos: <http://photos.joetourist.ca/teslamodels>

I attended the two summer star parties held on southern Vancouver Island again this year - the RASCals Star Party held near Victoria, and the Island Star Party held at Bright Angel Park in the Cowichan Valley. I always have fun socializing with my fellow astronomers, and the bonus was getting great observing weather for both star parties. Of course, I didn't get to camp out in the motor home this year, but I still managed to enjoy myself.

In September, I took a Rick Steves' tour through six European countries: the Netherlands, Bavaria in Germany, the Austrian Tyrol, Italy (Rome and north), the Lauterbrunnen Valley in Switzerland, and the Burgundy area of France. I spent a couple of extra days both before the tour started in Amsterdam and in Paris after the tour ended. This 21-day tour took us through many of the best sights in each the areas we visited. The tour was very well organized by a super efficient tour guide. It was a great experience - something completely different for me, who normally prefers warmer climates with palm trees and ocean breezes.

Photos: <http://photos.joetourist.ca/europe>

Our complement of pets grew by one this year. If you read my Christmas letter from last year, we had reluctantly returned Mello to outside living because he couldn't seem to adapt to being inside with his buddy Coda (who has been living inside for a year now). In September, we tried bringing Mello back inside again, and this time he behaved like a normal house cat. Go figure! We are delighted to have both Coda and Mello inside with us. They are best buddies, and even our Jack Russell Terriers Rolly and Tanner are giving the cats some space, and seem to coexist quite well. Speaking of Rolly and Tanner, they are another year older, but refuse to give up their puppy status! They both bounce around like crazy dogs most of the time.

**Merry Christmas to all and we hope you have a wonderful New Year!**

**Kirk and Joe, Rolly and Tanner, Mello and Coda.**