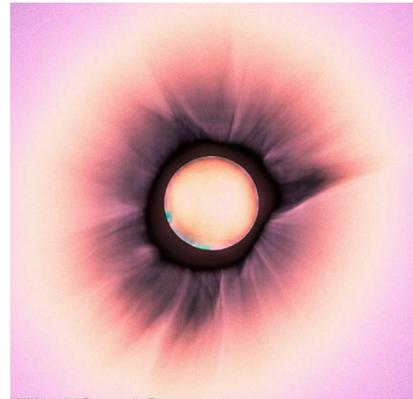




Christmas Letter 2016

In February and March, I took a [30-day Holland America cruise](#) aboard the *Volendam* out of Singapore, visiting lots of destinations in **SE Asia**. It was my first time visiting this region of the world, so it was fascinating to see all the different cultures in the five countries I visited. While aboard the ship, I also [observed a Total Solar Eclipse](#) from the Makassar Strait of Indonesia on March 9th. So this cruise was doubly exciting!



In **Indonesia**, I saw Komodo Dragons, the beautiful islands of Bali and Lombok, and volcanoes and temples on Java. Earlier in the cruise, we sailed up the Rangoon River, spending two days in **Burma-Myanmar**, where I saw beautiful golden temples, experienced the Scott Market and street festivals in Yangon (Rangoon). Visiting **Malaysia** and **Thailand** were also standout experiences. I actually took two back-to-back cruises, so I got to see quite a bit of **Singapore**, the home port for the ship.

On May 9th another rare astronomical event occurred: the [Transit of Mercury](#). This beautiful apparition was visible from my front yard here in Victoria, so no traveling was required and the weather miraculously cleared for that day! Earlier in April, I observed and [photographed Comet C/2014 S2 PANSTARRS](#) from our local astronomy club's observatory here in Victoria. So 2016 was a very fruitful year for observing rare astronomical events!

We had our **front deck replaced** this summer. It needed to be rebuilt, since the old deck was not only leaking, but was not originally built to code, so the job ended up taking a few weeks. We now have a nice new deck, and decided to get rid of the standard pickets and rails in favour of glass panels, so the overall look is very much improved!

My neighbour lost her husband several years ago, and she had been living in their house alone since then. Her family arranged for home support, but eventually she had to leave to live with her daughter where she could be better looked after. I was close to both of them for 25 years, so I did what I could to support them while they lived in their house. Eventually she decided to sell her house - it quickly sold in October, thanks to Victoria's hot housing market.



A young couple are currently doing a major renovation to the place before they move in.

There is also [a large property](#) further up the street being developed with townhouses. At the moment it has a single house on it, which will be demolished in favour of multi-family dwellings. Three other houses changed hands this year on our street, so our normally quiet little neighbourhood has seen it's share of disruption and change this year!

I have been active on the technology front. Earlier this year, I sold my Mac Mini computer and traded up to a Mac Pro with some fancy features, more power, and a beautiful Dell 27" 4k IPS monitor. This makes a wonderful desktop workstation, where I can edit video, attend to my various websites, and enjoy multimedia. I am also in the process of trading my two older MacBooks for a single, newly-released MacBook Pro 13", which should be good while travelling.

I also purchased a **new iPhone 6S Plus** with the bigger screen and more memory than my previous iPhone 5S. It is unlocked, so when I travel I have the option to avoid roaming charges.

I took my **Tesla** electric car to Vancouver to have it serviced in September. I made it into a mini-vacation – staying a couple of nights, and taking some time to visit with friends and relatives. I am still in love with my Model S two years later - the power and handling, and the quite ride is nothing short of amazing!

I had planned to celebrate my 64th birthday in October of this year on **Italy's Riviera**. The Rick Steves tour and the flights were all booked, but at the last minute I cancelled it all and stayed home. I just couldn't face the long flights and the attendant hassles of travelling for such a short trip. *I should know better, right?*

I have two trips planned for 2017 – *neither one involves air travel!* I will be going down to **Arizona** in February to stay with a friend who has an observatory in a rural area. I'm taking the train from Seattle to Tucson! I am also driving down to Oregon in August to see the [2017 Total Solar Eclipse](#), which tracks right across the USA.

Our two dogs and two cats are happy, healthy, and just as crazy as ever. Kirk and I keep active by walking the dogs several times each day.

I hope all your family have had a good year just past, and that you will celebrate the holiday season together. All the best to everyone for a healthy and prosperous New Year in 2017!



Joe and Kirk (the humans), Rolly and Tanner (the dogs), Coda and Mello (the cats)

Read more details online: <http://joecarr.ca/xmas-letter-2016/>