

Cars Powered by the Sun

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Twenty years ago, you could only laugh at the notion that we would have cars powered by the sun. Now, it is a reality.

Last year, I was fortunate enough to acquire a Tesla and have found the experience to be exhilarating. Not only is it fast, but it also slows very quickly due to the regenerative braking system it uses. It actually takes a few days to get used to just how quickly the Tesla brakes (with the added benefit of being easy on the brake pads). Its cornering is also impressive, plus plenty of gadgets in its large screen display. I also love the rear view camera, which I probably rely on a bit too much. That said, there is no question that the car judges distance in a parking space better than I do making it much easier to maneuver.

While many of the features of the Tesla are also available on gas powered cars, its smooth acceleration and glide-like feel cannot be reproduced except in an electric car. And, it seems, more of the Tesla is made in the United States (and, for the matter, California) than just about any other car.

My previous car was a 2002 Lexus. After 15 years and 243,000 miles, it still runs quite well, although it is getting a bit cranky in its old age (for example, its remote entry system no longer operates consistently). I used to joke that all I wanted was a car that performed like the Lexus but had no emissions. Well, the Tesla is that car but even more.

The elimination of pollutants is a benefit regardless of your beliefs about global warming. Of course, if you are concerned about climate change (and, if so, you may wish to Google “NASA Climate Change” for an excellent presentation of the science on climate change facts), driving a Tesla means keeping the American dream of a sleek, powerful car without much of the environmental damage.

Yes, there are still environmental costs to modern life, including the manufacture of a car, but the Tesla is a huge step in the right direction. It is also true that if the electricity that charges the Tesla comes from a coal burning plant, you may not have accomplished that much. However, here in Sonoma County, we have Sonoma Clean Power, which solves most of that concern. You can also go a step further, which I recently did. With a home solar system, you can now have a car powered by the sun!

I recognize that I am fortunate to have the resources to take these environmentally friendly steps. I hope that it will become easier and easier to do that for everyone.