

The best dang car available **Leading the charge**

by Greeley Wells

For a couple of years now I've been reading "Hybrid Kingdom," a green car newsletter (www.hybridkingdom.com). When it described the Chevy Volt last year, I was excited, and now that it is in its second year and probably has worked out most of its problems I've bought one.

Most people seem to think it's an electric car. Not exactly. It is not a conventional electric car with a specific and scary range limit, and it's not a hybrid that uses a gas engine to run the wheels when electricity is gone. Though it does have a small gas engine, that engine only runs a generator that keeps the batteries charged indefinitely. Imagine the difference in an engine that only runs a generator and not tons of car. The generator kicks in, keeping the batteries charged and allowing the car to continue on literally forever. So much so that I drove straight through from Applegate, Oregon, to Seattle, Washington, to see my Dad.

This was my first long-distance test of the car. So I gassed up in Grants Pass, Oregon, to start full, and averaged 41.4 miles per gallon on the trip, but my lifetime average was better than 72.4 miles per gallon, even with this long trip. I went 397.2 miles one way on one and a half tanks of gas and the gas bill for seven or eight gallons of gas was about \$30. (It's a nine-gallon tank and uses premium gas.) This is sooo much better than my good old Subaru. And I've got to say it has all and more of the pep, speed, smoothness and stopping ability the Subaru has. It's just great.

One more observation: There was nowhere to plug it in in the parking lot of my dad's place in Seattle. So it just sat there for three nights, like any normal car, and fired up when I needed it like a champ. I went about a third of the way home before I needed another \$30 fill-up that took me all the way home and more.

So what is it again? It is...ah...well...a Chevy Volt—the best, most green, unique, comfortable and efficient car on the road with no limitations on range at all. I will only need this one car for all my driving needs. It gets a full charge from my house for about \$1.50 worth of electricity—beat that. That gives you about 30 - 40 miles of driving in my hilly terrain.

It is also well appointed and the best, most modern car I've ever owned. It's now plugged in outside my house where I live off the grid on Carberry Creek. It takes me to Ashland where I can also plug it in, and then brings me back home. It makes it with mostly electricity and a little generating each way after a charge from any standard 120-volt electric source. I've owned it almost five months now as I write this. I bought it on Friday, January 13.

It is a four-seater with an ample rear boot under the hatchback, and the two back seats drop down flat to make a nice large space behind for carrying all the stuff for which I seem to need room. It's really aerodynamic. It has a regenerative braking system and when coasting also charges the batteries. It's filled with bells and whistles I've just begun to understand.

Yes, I have one complaint. The visibility is down from the Subaru (it's sporty and shorter so all the windows are smaller). I've put a little fisheye mirror on the outside corner of both outside rearview mirrors and now have no blinds spot at all. So there is a solution.

In short...I love it. It's today's best-kept car secret and I'd like to break the news so it's no longer a secret. If



you can afford a new award-winning midsize car and want to do the environment and yourself some good, you can hardly do better than this car. I'm going to stay away from the costs as there are high-end and low-end prices starting from around \$30 something thousand. It is on the expensive side because there are so few of them and almost no one seems to know about them yet. As more of us jump on this bandwagon, the lower the price will soon be. However, there's a \$7,500 federal tax break, which lowers the price considerably. Haven't figured out if there's an Oregon tax break. So if you're curious, give it a test drive: electric power has direct drive and is quite quick.

I'm spreading the word because I think green is important. I bought the showroom model because it was the right color, but I decided to leave the large Volt logo on the side just to advertise it and entice folks to ask me about it, which they do. This article for the Gater is also me trying to get the word out. This car is it to me.

Here's a couple of informative websites for you: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/3108-miles-per-gallon-for-chevy-volt.html> and <http://www.hybridcars.com/news/volt-teardown-reveals-high-tech-upgradability-36221.html>.

Thank you for reading, and happy driving. You probably won't see me at the gas pump.

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