

## Slowly... Saving the Planet

After weeks of searching, I'd found the perfect holiday. A two bedroom cottage on a lake in Devon, dog-friendly, enclosed garden and, most importantly an electric vehicle charger for my new car. It ticked all the boxes and the owner was happy to let us have it Tuesday to Tuesday, accommodating our holiday dates. There was room to take our friend Cathy, who was happy to help out with the dogs as well.

The only reservation Mike had was the length of the journey and recharging the car en-route. It's fine, I said, the salesman told me when I got it, you can give the battery a full charge in 40 minutes! I had only ever charged the car at home overnight. Mike suggested we could use his daughter's BMW as she was away at the same time. I dismissed the idea as;

- a) It only had two doors (consider 3 adults, two dogs and all the luggage)
- b) I wasn't insured to drive it
- c) We weren't saving the planet

He reluctantly agreed.

We seemed to have an awful of bags and paraphernalia, but we finally had everything in the car with not an inch to spare. Sat Nav informed us the journey would take 4hrs 13 mins and was about 230 miles. The car's range was 210 miles. Sat Nav or the car lied, or maybe they were in collusion to make it the journey from hell? Off we set...

We planned to stop at Taunton to visit Keith, have lunch and charge the car for the last leg of the journey. We sailed onto the M25 slip road, then limped along at 5mph until we got to the M3! Remember the very hot June we had? Our holiday started on the day the weather broke. Rain of biblical proportions and a few thunderstorms thrown in! It soon became evident that the charge of 210 miles wouldn't get us to Taunton. At Solstice Services we pulled into a Holiday Inn car park.

This was where the problems really began. To use most of the chargers you have to download an App. Think about when you fill up with petrol, you have a nice canopy to keep you sheltered from the rain. Not so with electric chargers, you are exposed to the elements, attaching a python from the charger to your car, putting the app on your phone that demands all your personal details including payment and that bloody password '10 letters, at least one capital, one number and one special character.' Now repeat it, in the pouring rain with a touch screen phone that I had to keep drying on my sleeve.

That was the first time Mike said, "We should have bought the BMW" and it wasn't the last. We sat in the car with steamy windows, watching the charge bar slowly rising, equating to a charge of 26mph. Mike took the dogs for a very soggy walk around the hotel car park and I phoned Keith with apologies, at this rate it would take 5 hours to charge to get to Devon. We realised this wasn't a 'speedy' charger. So after an hour, some phone calls and fraught tempers, we set out to find another one! Mike had become Victor Meldrew, poor Cathy sat in the back like Mrs Warbuoys.

Mike aka Victor gave a running commentary on how many miles we'd travelled versus how many we had left on the charge, there was some steering wheel slapping and "See, see, we've lost 8 miles over the last 5." We finally pulled into a Morrison's car park in Wincanton. Dowloading yet another app, attaching the python etc. whilst someone poured a bucket of water over me! Mike checked the charging speed... 26mph again. Something wasn't right...He may have mentioned the BMW. I politely suggested he went and looked around the supermarket whilst I looked at the online car manual.

Then the penny dropped, under the 5 pin socket in my car, there was a plastic cover. Once you removed this, two more pins were located below, meaning you used a different lead from the machine. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. We had already been on the road for 4 hours. The bar went up to maximum with a full charge taking 40 minutes. I'd like to say the rest of the journey went smoothly but it didn't. We arrived at the cottage on minus 10 miles in 'turtle mode' an actual status on the car limiting the speed. Arriving on fresh air, 8 hours after we left home. Charging anxiety is real. It felt like a white knuckle ride.

If you see Mike, please do not get him started about electric cars nor mention BMWs.