

Published December 18th, 2013

For Love of a Car Local real estate agent starts the "Lamorinda Tesla Club"

By Clare Varellas



Vlatka Bathgate with her Tesla at a gas station she won't need. Photo provided

Orinda Coldwell Banker real estate agent Vlatka Bathgate was driving a Vietnamese client around to various listings the other day in her 2-month-old Model S Tesla when she asked her client if he would like to listen to a radio station from his own country.

"I was able to bring up all of the radio stations from Vietnam," said Bathgate. "Or sometimes I drive a client from Michigan, so I'm able to bring up all of the radio stations from that area. I'm from Croatia, and for every town in Croatia (and there are hundreds of them) I could get all the town's radio stations."

But Bathgate, a relatively new Tesla owner, claims that this is only one of many useful technologies her metallic blue luxury car affords her. In fact, she has grown to be so enamored with the car and its vast list of functions and features that a month ago she created the "Lamorinda Tesla Club," a coalition of Tesla owners living in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda whose goal in coming together is to better understand and appreciate the expensive but technologically and environmentally savvy type of automobile.

"It's early days for the club but the idea is to socialize with other Tesla owners, swap car stories, and I kind of like the idea of a Tesla car convoy," said Bathgate. "Every Tesla owner I have met in the area has loved the idea of the club and wanted to join."

Bathgate purchased a Tesla in late October after a long search for the perfect luxury car.

"It was time for me to get a new car, and I did a lot of research, and nothing sounded good to me," said Bathgate. "I was spending a lot of money for just another car. So when I got to Tesla and I took a drive, I thought it was something different, it was good for the environment, and it had a lot of technology. It's just a sleek and beautiful car."

The Tesla's 17-inch touch screen that contains nearly all of the cars' controls appealed to Bathgate, who says she also uses to screen to show clients maps of listings to which they are headed. In addition, she likes that she can set controls from an app she has on her smart phone. Strangely, drivers do not need to turn on the car; it turns on automatically when a driver enters the vehicle.

"The car recognizes you and turns on by itself," said Bathgate. "When you are done driving, you just leave the car. You don't turn it off."

In response to some complaints from other Tesla owners that the car takes too long to charge electronically while gas-powered vehicles fill up with fuel in mere minutes, Bathgate says that this problem can easily be avoided by charging the car at times it is not being used.

"It doesn't take long to charge," said Bathgate. "It's just like with a phone. Usually I do it overnight, but I can figure out the timing when I want to have it charged."

Bathgate also disagrees with other owners' claims that it is impossible to take road trips in Teslas because of the distance between public electronic charging stations. Tesla spokesman Patrick Jones agrees with Bathgate, saying that an increasing number of large and powerful charging stations, called "Superchargers," are available for Tesla owners' use along roadways.

"We are aggressively expanding our network of Superchargers," said Jones. "Tesla Superchargers allow Model S owners to travel long distances for free between cities along well-traveled highways."

As of now, Bathgate says that her club is relatively small, but growing. She plans on scheduling some club events after the hubbub of the holiday season dies down. More than anything, she feels empowered by the fact that she and other Tesla owners are helping the planet by using their electric cars instead of gas-powered vehicles, even if the environmental impact is relatively minor.

"This is such a nice world that we live in, and if we do little by little, then we can help the environment," said Bathgate.

For more information about the Lamorinda Tesla Club, visit www.lamorindateslaclub.com.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA