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# JUST FOR CANADIAN DENTISTS

life + leisure

*recharge in*  
**QUÉBEC**  
*go west in*  
**CHINA**



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**inside:** CONTINUING DENTAL EDUCATION CALENDAR

where will you meet? **SHANGHAI** / EDMONTON / PRAGUE / WHISTLER / OSAKA >>

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## Powered up

The Pacifica Hybrid packs a lot of perks into its minivan profile

Anyone with a passion for motoring must take an active interest in the electrification of our collective fleet. By nature I'm not an early adapter, nor a tech geek. Nor could I envision living with the range limitations of a fully electric vehicle (EV). However, as the newer plug-in hybrids gain in effective electric range I'm curious if that technology might fit my lifestyle. As a fortuitous coincidence the new Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid is re-invigorating the mini-van segment.

A cherry-red Pacifica Hybrid arrived for a one-week stay at the Silverthorn household. My only instruction was "the cord is in the

downtown, usually a 20-to-25-minute drive from home. A return trip downtown spends 50% of a fully stored charge. The airport and big-box stores are 30 to 35 minutes away with faster speed limits. A Costco return trip just drains the last ampere from a full charge upon my return. Thus, with a little pre-planning, the plug-in Pacifica meets all of our local metropolitan needs off an overnight recharge on 110V wall juice.

So the Pacifica Hybrid can perform the utilitarian role required of our household...but how *pleasant* of a tool was our platinum-trim model to use? It drove quite reasonably for its intended mission. Its sight lines are great. It has an entire suite of modern safety and convenience features. Fit and finish aren't Lexus-like, but they aren't bad either. A sampling of standard "platinum" features includes navigation, leather seats (both heated and cooled), multiple DVD players with headphones, a serious Sirius radio and active noise cancellation.

The latter auditory features are nice to have. Once the 56 km of wall juice is exhausted the "Electronically Variable Transmission" means the V6 gas-engine noise and the vehicle's

speed profiles are not in cosmic harmony. The Pacifica's badass stereo drowns that disharmony out nicely, which I fittingly figured out while the Sirius Classic Vinyl station belted out *The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys* by Traffic.

If needed, the Pacifica can swallow far more people and gear than a comparable priced SUV. The Pacifica will ride better too, despite hauling around 600 pounds of 12 KV battery. At present, no Pacifica of any kind is available with all-wheel-drive. The minivan stigma and the AWD non-availability may give some car shoppers pause but before holding onto those thoughts, let's talk capital and operating costs.

The price premium of the plug-in-hybrid Pacifica over a similarly equipped dino-juice-only Pacifica is hard to determine given differences in standard equipment.

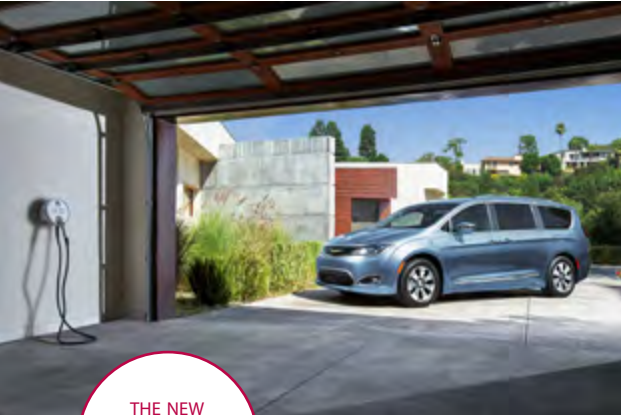
For argument's sake I'll posit that the hybrid driveline capital cost is \$2,000 more, though I suspect it's far less. I'm paying \$1.25 per litre for dino juice and \$1.70 per 12 KW for wall juice. I'd spend \$1,750 less on juice per year with the Pacifica Hybrid over the dino-juice-only Pacifica at our 15,000 km per year usage—assuming 90% of our driving is metropolitan on 110V wall juice.

The cost/price scenario gets far more complex (and attractive) depending on where in Canada you live. The Pacifica's hybrid design qualifies for the same substantial taxpayer-funded green purchase/lease rebates as a full EV in the three provinces with rebate programs: \$14,000 in Ontario, \$8,000 in Québec and \$5,000 in British Columbia. If you live in one of these three provincial jurisdictions your fellow provincial taxpayers are going to subsidize your capital costs for this vehicle handsomely to then save you even more operating-juice dollars! Present and future carbon taxes will also fall less heavily on plug-in-hybrid drivers. What's not to like?

Alas, no cash contribution from Justin's feds to green vehicle buyers just yet. Interestingly, The Donald has not yet cancelled the generous federal rebates to green car buyers in the United States.

Have you noticed the giddy happiness of electrified car owners? I now understand it after my Pacifica Hybrid experience. Good ol' cognitive dissonance is no doubt at play, "I made this alternative choice, so it must be good, because I am no fool." Another is the "pre-paying effect." We'll enjoy each day of our St. Bart's vacation far more if we paid for it all six months prior, than if we paid as we consumed each flight leg, each night's hotel stay, each beach towel, each meal. The EV or plug-in hybrid is the prepaid version of the St. Bart's vacation. But that's not all.

My own personal halo actually looked ever-greener as the week with the Pacifica Hybrid unfolded. Saving the planet is always laudable. Saving greenbacks while saving the planet is a no-brainer. Still not sold? Last perk: How much would it be worth to you for HOV lane access 24/7/365 and free use of toll highways? I'm just sayin' the latest in plug-in hybrids are ponder-worthy. ●



THE NEW STANDARD?  
2017 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid

back." Indeed the cord plugged easily into my home 110V wall plug and then into the Pacifica itself. A fully depleted Pacific Hybrid battery pack is 100% recharged to 56 km of range after 14 hours of 110V charging, or just two hours on 220 volts. I'm inherently too lazy to bundle the cord with me to seek out public re-charging stations on my travels. After all, a key plug-in hybrid feature is zero range anxiety. The Pacifica's dinosaur-juice-fed V6 internal combustion engine kicks in once the 56 km of stored-wall-juice energy is spent.

We live a 10-to-12-minute drive from our "to-do list" commercial district (groceries, gym, bank, take-out food). A return trip to this district depletes 24% of the Pacifica's charge. Farther in the same direction is



## Spirit of Sichuan

Deep in southwest China, within the region of **Sichuan** and atop the **Tibetan plateau** is a *secluded and ENIGMATIC land*. Engage, connect and navigate *selfie sticks* amidst much **beauty...**

STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Janet Gyenes



**G**lancing nervously to my right, I see the muscular shoulders of the mountains leaning against the milky-green Minjiang River in Sichuan province in southwest China. If the massive yak I'm reluctantly sitting astride decides he's had enough, he could launch me over the railing with little more than a shrug. Aside from that, I could almost pretend I was in the Canadian Rockies range overlooking one of its glacier-fed rivers.

I remind myself that this stoic beast is not some mechanical bull I'm trying to ride in a country bar. So I smile at his wrangler, who's holding my iPhone, spreading my arms wide open as if to say, "You win." I had tried to persuade the thin man wearing a cowboy-like hat to pose beside the animal, but he wouldn't budge—until I agreed to get into the saddle.

"He's a show yak!" one of my travelling companions declares. She's right. The animal's white coat is immaculately combed. Red pompons adorn his thick horns and his saddle is swathed with silky fabric. He's not unlike a giant stuffie you win at the fair. Indeed, yaks are prized pack animals here in the remote reaches of the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture.

This encounter is one of many eye-opening stops on a bus ride that started in Chengdu, Sichuan's capital, and travelled north on Highway 213, tracing the Minjiang River, a thin thread pinched between the Minshan and Longmen mountain ranges. I'm part of a group of North Americans headed to Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park, then driving through a 4,000-metre mountain pass to reach Huanglong National Park.

These are just two of the country's 52 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Only Italy has more with 53, but it shares many sites with other countries. I can quickly rattle off many of Italy's natural and manmade wonders. China's? I can barely think of any besides The Great Wall, much less pronounce their names or pin them to a map. China is often characterized by superlatives and broad brushstrokes, but it's impossible to define the DNA of a country of 1.38 billion people, spread across a region just slightly smaller than Canada, solely by its opaque political system and modern megalopolises that are pincushions of skyscrapers shrouded in smoggy skies. As Confucius said, "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."

My consciousness-raising began on the outskirts of Chengdu, just before I met the yak, when our guide Thea Yang pointed out the Dujiangyan Irrigation System, which supplies water to the Chengdu plains. The World Heritage Site was constructed in the 3rd-century BC and is the only surviving no-dam irrigation system on the planet. Yang also points out

**PREVIOUS PAGE** Huanglong Ancient temple, Huanglong National Park  
**TOP ROW FROM LEFT** Panda Lake, Tibetan village, woman in traditional Tibetan attire at Five-Colour Pond; all Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park.  
**BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT** Fish in Panda Lake, Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park; Yak and Minjiang River, Highway 213; Tibetan prayer flags.



a giant statue of Li Bing, the system's engineer and designer. Nearby is Fulong Temple named for Li's feat in "suppressing" an evil dragon to free the area from floods and harness the Minjiang River, a tributary of the Yangtze, Asia's longest river. We're not far from Wenchuan county, the epicentre of the devastating 8.0-magnitude earthquake that left 87,000 people dead or missing in 2008.

Passengers on the bus drift to sleep, but I can't rip my gaze from my window on this world. Every blink reveals another rapid-fire snapshot that lasts an instant before being subsumed by the next. In the villages, white homes have wooden fretwork surrounding their windows, garlanded with bright-red chili peppers. It's an Instagram-worthy shot that, with the right filter, could easily be one of southern Spain's *pueblos blancos* or white towns. Then there are Tibetan prayer flags strung in their unwavering order of five colours—blue, white, red, green, yellow—fluttering perpetually and sending spiritual vibrations to the heavens. Distant stone watchtowers and tombs are ominous relics of ancient times.

I spot a woman embroidering. Another is braiding her long black hair. Men shovel and smooth concrete. Chicken strut and peck dangerously close to traffic. We pass restaurants with monstrous decals of chickens, yaks and whiskered fish beckoning (or terrifying) from their dusty windows. At another roadside stop I buy a bag of dried yellow cherries with sticky stems intact and watch vendors tend to eggs steeping in tea-like liquid, corn cobs bubbling in hot water and lumpy yams roasting on a metal grill. Near Qiang we stop for lunch and feast on local vegetables—peppers, mushrooms, cabbage—roasted in clay pots and swimming in soups, chicken seasoned with lip-numbing Sichuan peppercorns, plus delicious jerky-like yak.

*if you go*  
 To learn more about Huanglong National Park, Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park or Sichuan's other scenic spots, go to the Sichuan Tourism website: [tsichuan.com](http://tsichuan.com)

We continue northward to Jiuzhaigou Valley, named for the nine stockaded Tibetan villages in the area and famed for its old-growth forests, ribbon lakes and glacial valleys that soar to 4,752 metres in the southern Minshan Mountains. Here, we board another big bus to explore the 720-square-kilometre park. This sister-park with Yosemite, Yellowstone and Olympic National Parks in the US is home to reclusive giant pandas, a goat-antelope called the Sichuan *takin* and 140 species of birds.

It's late October and the leaves have begun their chameleonic change from jade to ochre and rust. I walk the wooden boardwalk that traces the 320-metre-wide arcs of Nuorilang Waterfall, mesmerized by its water droplets, evanescent prisms reflecting beams of light. (At the time of writing, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake rocked Jiuzhaigou county, killing 24 people and affecting natural sites in the region like Nuorilang.) Elevated walkways traverse a number of Jiuzhaigou's lakes, which bear fanciful names such as Crouching Dragon, Panda and Tiger, among others, and have a fantastical backstory:



**TOP ROW FROM LEFT Selfies in front of Five-Colour Ponds and Huanglong Ancient temple, Huanglong National Park; Panda Lake, Nuorilang Waterfall; Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park. BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT Huanglong Ancient temple (2), Huanglong National Park; Tibetan village, Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park.**