

Visiting Other Countries This Year Gave Me New Insight on What's Possible

Tuesday evening Rita and I returned from completing our world tour. It took us from Los Angeles to Hawaii, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, South Africa, Senegal, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, France, England, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and Canada. From Montreal, we drove through northern New England at peak foliage, before flying home from Boston on Tuesday. In addition to daily lectures by distinguished diplomats and professors, we went on shore excursions in each port, learning how life differs from country to country.

I was interested in how people were housed, and, being committed to sustainable living and saving the planet from the ravages of climate change, I paid attention to how sustainable their energy grid is, and how water and waste are handled. As a longtime owner of EVs, I also noted whether the places we visited were more or less on board with the shift to EVs than here at home.

Altogether, Rita and I were away for over five months, with a 3½-month break back in Colorado this summer. See my postings at <http://WhereAreJimandRita.substack.com>.

We were most impressed with the Scandinavian countries — Sweden, Denmark and Norway. As I reported on my blog, every bus and truck in those countries is equipped with a breathalyzer interlock device. The vehicle will not start without the driver proving through that device that he has zero alcohol in his bloodstream. That's right, not below a legal limit but zero. Passenger cars don't have such a device, but the penalties for driving with even a low alcohol level are severe. The result has been a huge decline in alcohol-related accidents and deaths.

In Sweden the secondary roads have photo radar units every few miles, and if you are captured on camera going more than 15 kilometers per hour over the speed limit, your driver's license can be suspended. (Fortunately, even the rural highways have bus service.) On my blog you'll find a video showing one of these roadside radar units. Here's a screenshot from it:

Here in America, we have photo radar units which generate speeding and red light tickets for drivers, but the tickets do not result in points against your license.

Crime rates, especially gun violence, is so much lower everywhere we visited, because gun ownership is so rare compared to America, where there are more guns than people.

In Copenhagen, over 50 percent of workers commute by bicycle, helped by winters which are milder than in Denver. Montreal, however, despite its harsh winters, is recognized as the most bike-friendly city in the world, with more bike lanes than Amsterdam.

As far as we could tell, homelessness was not a significant problem anywhere we visited, unlike in America. In Sweden and Norway, most middle-class people live in the city but have a summer cottage, so statistically there is more than one home per household overall.

Single-family homes are much rarer in these other countries. Most people either rent or own an apartment in a multi-family structure. In Montreal we were shown the six-family homes constructed following World War II to house returning soldiers. In America, the post-war pattern was set by Levittown: subdivisions of one-story homes, typically with a garage, made possible, of course, by all the empty land here.

Levittown is also famous for not selling to black soldiers, which brings up another observation. In a lecture we attended on the topic of why Scandinavians are regularly ranked as the happiest people in the world, it was pointed out that those countries have no history of serfdom or indentured servants, as one of the reasons. There's less ingrained fear among populations.

Regarding EVs, there was a vast disparity in the adoption rate of electric vehicles from country to country. In Norway, effective Jan. 1

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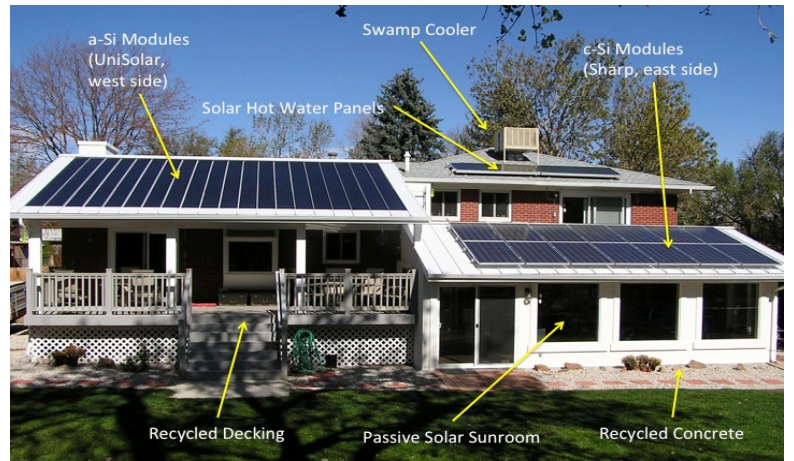
By JIM SMITH Realtor®

of this year, every taxicab had to be an EV, and in Bergen all city buses and most tourist buses are electric. In Montreal, the EV adoption rate is similar to here, but the trucks and

buses are all diesel, and the street noise level is unpleasantly high, especially from garbage trucks.

I encourage you to check out my blog for other insights.

Don't Miss Saturday's Green Homes Tour!



Now is the best time to create a more sustainable home. The benefits are huge, and the savings are tempting. But how do you start? The easy first step is to experience the annual **Metro Denver Green Homes Tour**, of which Golden Real Estate is a co-sponsor.

Join the self-guided tour from **9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, October 5th** for just \$15 per adult or \$25 per couple. Follow the maps in the guidebook to see some fantastic homes, all at your own pace. Explore creative older home retrofits *and* exciting new homes. See how your neighbors are enjoying beautiful, comfortable and healthy homes that benefit their communities and take on the changing climate, all while saving significant money over time.

Get some great ideas for your home. The tour features **post-Marshall-fire homes** rebuilt with unique sustainable and energy efficient designs; a **Washington Park 1920s Craftsman-style green remodel**; a 1950s home with a **ground-source heat pump**, solar power, and xeriscaping; the latest energy-efficient **all-electric townhomes**; an updated **1979 solar home**; and more.

Learn about current government and utility **incentives**. Learn how to harness free energy with dependable solar power and battery systems that shield you from brownouts and blackouts while dodging expensive utility time-of-use rates. Discover the latest heat pump technology; **passive solar strategies**; **induction cooking**; effective insulation; **electric lawncare equipment**; accessory dwelling units; and state-of-the-art construction materials.

After the tour, plan to attend the free **Reception & Green Expo**: 4:30 to 6:30pm at Jefferson Unitarian Church (JUC), **14350 W. 32nd Ave., Golden**. Enjoy free appetizers, local beverages and live music. See renewable energy & sustainable living **exhibits**, a mobile container home unit, and electric bikes. From 3 to 5pm check out the electric cars in our **annual EV roundup**.

Bring your questions. Talk to homeowners and gain from their experiences and advice. Talk to builders and suppliers and learn about the latest techniques, technologies and money saving incentives. Purchase a ticket at www.NewEnergyColorado.org.



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