Headline: Popularity of EVs growing in number of areas

Deckhead: AAA finds travelers are renting them on vacation for test drives

Consumer interest in electric vehicles has skyrocketed during the past decade. EV purchases totaled 96,000 in 2013 and are expected to reach 1 million by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, travelers are beginning to take notice and some are “taking one for a spin” while on vacation, thanks to them being available as rental cars. AAA’s rental-car partner, Hertz, has been investing heavily in EVs for its fleet with purchases from Tesla, Polestar and GM.

The company has tens of thousands of EVs for rent at more than 1,600 locations in 44 states. Hertz is focusing on providing nearly 2 million EV rentals by the end of this year – about five times the number of EV rentals it had in 2022.

Record-breaking fuel prices have inspired consumers to purchase EVs. Sales increased by more than 65% from 2021 to 2022. Drivers regularly say cost, range anxiety and availability of charging stations are among their prime concerns as to why they are skeptical to purchase an EV.

A recent survey by Verra Mobility found that 78% of Americans would consider renting an EV to become more familiar with the car before making a purchase.

A AAA survey from 2020 found that driving an EV alleviated concerns and of the those surveyed, 77% said they were less or no longer concerned about range after buying and EV; and 96% said they would buy or lease another EV the next time they were in the market for a new car.

Many of those who remain uncertain or are considering buying an EV have been renting them to “kick the tires.” It may be test-driving one for the weekend in town or planning ahead and requesting one for a trip.

What first-time EV drivers should consider:

***Understand the driving range –*** The rental-car agent should explain to you how far you can expect to go on a full charge and how that changes depending on how many passengers you have and how much luggage and gear you are packing. It’s important for drivers to pay close attention to the charge they have and to know how far they need to travel to recharge the vehicle.

***Finding and booking a charging spot –*** Charging an EV is different than filling up a traditional vehicle. Researching charging locations and how to pay to charge a vehicle are important steps before renting an EV. Some states and regions have more charging opportunities than others.

***Road trips take more planning –*** Planning is essential if you are renting an EV for a road trip at your destination. Charging stations normally are along the busiest routes. There are fewer charging options in rural areas. Make sure there are ample charging stations available if you are traveling to a remote location.

***Understand the technology –*** EVs are different from internal-combustion engines. The gauges will look different and the onboard electronics may seem unfamiliar to anyone who is new to EVs. Most EVs also comes with advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) like lane-departure warnings, blind-spot warnings, automatic-emergency braking and adaptive-cruise control. Acceleration and braking also are different. Knowing what the car can and cannot do are important before hitting the road.

Cutline: PLUG IT IN – Hertz plans to have 2 million electric vehicles available to customers by the end of this year. Image: AAA.