PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

I Bought an Electric Car and Now I Plan Every Trip Like a Polar Expedition

How to Choose Charging Options, Plan Longer Journeys, and Compare Real-World Running Costs Without Basing Every Decision on Advertised Range



Max Paradox

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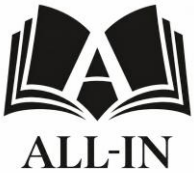
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ALL-IN Rafał Płonkowski



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INTRO

It is 9:17 on a Friday evening, and you are standing beside a motorway charging station, holding a lukewarm sandwich and questioning several important decisions you have made in life. Your electric car has 18 percent battery remaining. The charger proudly advertises 350 kW, which sounds impressive until the screen informs you that your car is currently accepting 54. Your navigation system says you will reach the hotel at 11:42 p.m. Your partner has stopped asking questions, which is somehow more alarming than when the questions were coming every thirty seconds. Meanwhile, a man in a petrol-powered car has arrived, filled his tank, bought a packet of crisps, and disappeared into the night. You are still trying to understand why an electricity supplier needs your date of birth before allowing you to purchase electricity.

Welcome to electric vehicle ownership, where the future of transportation occasionally feels like an elaborate administrative exercise with heated seats.

Of course, this was not how you imagined things when you bought the car. You imagined effortless acceleration, quiet journeys, convenient charging, and the pleasant satisfaction of spending less on energy. The advertising showed beautiful roads, spectacular scenery, and relaxed drivers who seemed to have achieved a level of personal fulfilment usually associated with winning the lottery. Charging appeared wonderfully simple. Someone plugged in a cable, enjoyed a coffee, and drove away smiling. Nobody mentioned that the coffee might need to last forty minutes, that the charger might require three separate authentication attempts, or that your car might have a very different opinion about how much power it wishes to accept.

None of this means buying an electric car was a mistake. Electric vehicles can be genuinely enjoyable, economical, and convenient.

For many drivers, they make everyday travel remarkably straightforward. The difficulty is that electric motoring introduces a different relationship with energy, infrastructure, and time. In a petrol or diesel car, you rarely think about the rate at which fuel enters the tank. You certainly do not spend breakfast comparing the performance characteristics of different fuel pumps. With an electric vehicle, however, the difference between a slow charging point and a rapid charger can influence your plans. So can the temperature, your destination, and whether you have somewhere convenient to plug in overnight.

The first trap is believing that the advertised range tells you everything you need to know. A manufacturer may quote a figure obtained under a standardised testing procedure. That figure can be useful for comparing vehicles, but it is not a promise that every journey will produce exactly the same result. Motorway speeds, strong winds, hills, heating, and cold weather can all change energy consumption. A car capable of delivering excellent range on one journey may require an earlier charging stop on another. This is not automatically evidence of a defective battery or dishonest engineering. It is evidence that a moving vehicle must obey physical laws, even when those laws interfere with an exceptionally persuasive marketing campaign.

Then there is charging, a subject that initially appears designed to make otherwise intelligent adults feel spectacularly underqualified. You encounter kilowatts, kilowatt-hours, alternating current, direct current, charging curves, battery temperatures, connector standards, and payment services. Some charging stations deliver impressive power under favourable conditions. Others take considerably longer than expected. Even the same car can charge at different speeds depending on its battery level and temperature. Fortunately, you do not need an electrical engineering degree to understand the useful parts. You need to recognise what determines charging time, how much

energy your journey requires, and whether a particular charging option actually suits your circumstances.

Money introduces another layer of confusion. Someone who charges at home using a favourable electricity tariff may report remarkably low driving costs. Someone relying on expensive motorway chargers may tell a very different story. Both experiences can be genuine. The price of electricity varies, charging losses matter, and subscription plans do not automatically deliver savings. More importantly, electricity is only one part of vehicle ownership. Insurance, maintenance, tyres, financing, depreciation, and the original purchase price all influence the financial picture. If you want to know whether an electric car is cheaper for you, the answer requires more than comparing one electricity bill with one petrol receipt. A convincing calculation should survive contact with your bank account.

Your circumstances matter just as much as the technical specifications. A homeowner with a suitable charging installation faces different challenges from someone parking on a city street. A driver covering twenty miles most days has different requirements from someone routinely travelling hundreds of miles between appointments. The owner of a large battery does not necessarily have a better experience than the owner of a smaller one if their charging arrangements are completely different. There is no universal solution that makes every electric vehicle ideal for every household. Anyone insisting otherwise is probably overlooking some important details, possibly while standing beside their own conveniently installed home charger.

This book is about replacing unnecessary uncertainty with practical understanding. You will learn how to interpret range estimates without treating them as sacred promises, choose charging methods that match your schedule, and approach longer journeys without becoming the unpaid logistics coordinator of your own family. We will examine what makes a charging stop

worthwhile, how to compare running costs fairly, and how to respond when infrastructure is less cooperative than expected. The objective is not to turn you into someone who can calculate battery consumption mentally while ordering breakfast. It is to help you recognise which calculations matter and when you can safely stop calculating.

We will also take the less glamorous situations seriously. Sometimes you need to travel unexpectedly. Sometimes the charger is occupied, the weather is miserable, or you discover that the accommodation advertising electric vehicle charging has precisely one socket with a mysterious booking procedure. Sometimes the most economical option is inconvenient, and sometimes the fastest option costs more than you would prefer. Real people have jobs, children, budgets, commitments, and limits to their patience. Good advice should still work when your day has not been carefully arranged around achieving optimum battery efficiency.

One thing you will not find here is a demand to sacrifice comfort for a few extra miles. There is no prize for reaching your destination freezing cold because you refused to use the heater. Nor does every journey need to become a competition to arrive with the lowest possible battery percentage. Sensible energy management should support comfortable, safe travel, not replace it with elaborate acts of self-denial. You may occasionally decide that a faster journey is worth a higher charging bill, or that an extra stop is worth the additional reassurance. Those are legitimate choices when you understand their consequences.

Before going any further, consider your own last frustrating electric journey. What actually caused the difficulty? Was there insufficient energy, an unreliable prediction, an inconvenient charger, an unexpected cost, or simply a lack of confidence about what would happen next? Those problems may feel identical when you are sitting in a car park watching the battery indicator, but they require different responses. Identifying the real difficulty is more

useful than downloading another app and hoping its colourful map will solve everything.

The goal is straightforward: your car should become something you use, not something you continually supervise. You will still need to charge it. You may sometimes plan a stop before leaving home, and an occasional journey will require more preparation than usual. But preparation should become proportionate to the challenge, rather than expanding to fill every available evening.

Eventually, that motorway charging station should become an ordinary part of a journey instead of the setting for a personal crisis. You will understand what the numbers mean, know when enough energy is enough, and recognise when a different choice makes more sense. Your sandwich may still be disappointing. The payment terminal might still have a personality disorder. But at least you will no longer confuse a minor inconvenience with the collapse of modern transportation.

You bought an electric car to go places. The point of this book is to make sure you spend more time enjoying those places than conducting detailed investigations into the nearest electricity supply.

Chapter 1 - The Advertised Range Has Left the Building, and Nobody Knows Where It Went

The trouble begins with a number. A beautiful, reassuring number printed in large type beside an equally beautiful photograph of an electric car. Perhaps it says 320 miles. Perhaps 400. Whatever the figure, it seems to answer the question that matters most when you are considering your first electric vehicle: how far can this thing actually go? You imagine comfortably driving between cities, visiting friends, and occasionally taking a holiday without becoming intimately acquainted with every motorway service station along the way. Then you buy the car, drive it for a few weeks, and discover that the number on the dashboard has a remarkable talent for changing its mind. Yesterday, a full battery promised 330 miles. Today, it suggests 265. You have not removed any battery cells, driven through a magnetic storm, or lent the car to someone who secretly used it for a cross-country expedition. Yet dozens of miles appear to have vanished. Naturally, you begin wondering whether the car was delivered with the economy-sized version of its advertised range.

The first thing to understand is that an advertised driving range is not a fixed quantity stored inside the vehicle. It is the outcome of a test conducted under defined conditions. Depending on the market, figures may come from procedures such as WLTP or the American EPA testing framework. These approaches have different requirements and can produce different results, so their figures should not automatically be treated as interchangeable. Standardised testing is useful because it gives buyers a common basis for comparing vehicles. Without it, every manufacturer could choose whichever route, weather conditions, and driving style produced the most flattering number. The resulting brochures

would probably advertise vehicles capable of crossing entire countries on electricity apparently supplied by optimism. A standard test improves comparability, but it cannot represent every road and every driver. The advertised figure describes performance under a particular testing framework, not an unconditional promise about your next journey.

Imagine buying a car that advertises 340 miles of range and then using it almost exclusively on fast motorways during cold weather. You might obtain a substantially lower result without anything being mechanically wrong. A different owner driving the same model through town in mild conditions could see a considerably more favourable figure. The important difference is the work each vehicle must perform. Moving at sustained motorway speeds demands energy to overcome aerodynamic resistance, while cold weather can introduce additional heating requirements and affect battery performance. Both drivers are using the same basic technology. Neither necessarily has discovered the definitive truth about the model's range. They have established how it behaves under two sets of circumstances. The manufacturer's number is a useful reference, but your circumstances determine how relevant that reference becomes.

There is another complication: the figure shown on your dashboard is usually an estimate rather than a direct measurement of how many miles are waiting inside the battery. The car knows, within the limitations of its battery management system, approximately how much usable energy remains. Converting that information into distance requires assumptions about future consumption. Some vehicles rely heavily on recent driving history. Others incorporate navigation information, predicted road conditions, temperature, or additional data. The exact calculation varies between manufacturers. Consequently, two vehicles showing the same battery percentage may display quite different remaining distances, even when both systems are behaving as designed. One

estimate might assume you will continue cruising gently through residential streets. Another might recognise that your navigation destination requires two hours of motorway driving. The battery has not changed merely because the predictions disagree.

This explains an experience that initially feels deeply suspicious. You leave home with 250 miles displayed, drive twenty miles, and discover that the remaining range has fallen by thirty-five. The natural reaction is to accuse the car of misplacing fifteen miles. But the vehicle may simply have revised its assumptions after observing your actual consumption. If you accelerate onto a motorway and maintain a higher speed than the recent driving history suggested, its estimate can move downward faster than the odometer moves upward. The reverse can happen when conditions become more favourable. A prediction that increases during an efficient stretch of driving does not mean your battery has spontaneously manufactured electricity. It means the relationship between available energy and expected consumption has changed. Your dashboard is attempting a forecast, not providing a sworn statement.

The distinction between battery percentage and estimated range matters enormously. Battery percentage is the vehicle's indication of its state of charge, while the range figure is a prediction expressed in distance. Neither should be confused with the amount of energy physically available in absolute terms. To understand that quantity, you need to know the battery's usable capacity. Manufacturers may distinguish between gross capacity and usable capacity because the battery management system can reserve some energy outside the normal operating window. A vehicle advertised with a particular total battery capacity does not necessarily make every kilowatt-hour available for ordinary driving. For planning purposes, the usable figure is generally the more meaningful starting point. Even that needs to be interpreted

alongside the vehicle's displayed state of charge and any limitations described in its documentation.

Consider a simplified example involving a car with a usable battery capacity of 72 kWh. At 75 percent charge, a proportional calculation suggests approximately 54 kWh remain available within the normal usable range. If the vehicle averages three miles per kilowatt-hour, that quantity of energy corresponds mathematically to about 162 miles. If efficiency falls to 2.5 miles per kilowatt-hour, the same energy corresponds to approximately 135 miles. Nothing has disappeared from the battery between these calculations. You have merely changed the assumed rate at which energy will be consumed. Actual results will be affected by changing conditions and the vehicle's systems, so these numbers should not be treated as guarantees or as invitations to drive until the display reaches zero. Their purpose is to demonstrate why an unchanged battery percentage can support several perfectly reasonable range estimates.

This also reveals why comparing dashboard photographs on the internet is such an unreliable way to judge electric vehicles. Someone posts a picture showing an extraordinarily high predicted range after charging. The comments immediately fill with admiration, disbelief, and requests for the exact software version. Another owner posts a lower figure and announces that the manufacturer has betrayed an entire generation of motorists. Neither photograph tells you enough about the driving conditions used to produce the estimate. You would need to know how the vehicle calculates its prediction, what driving preceded the photograph, and how the car actually performed over a meaningful journey. A large number on the screen is encouraging, but it is not the same as a measured driving result. Otherwise, the world's best electric car would simply be whichever model employed the most optimistic graphic designer.

The more useful question concerns a specific journey. Suppose you need to travel 155 miles to a seaside town, and your dashboard predicts 185 miles remaining. At first glance, the difference looks reassuring. But what created that prediction? Was it based on relaxed local driving, while the planned journey involves sustained motorway speeds? Will you arrive at a destination with convenient charging, or will you need additional energy to reach your accommodation afterward? Is there a practical charging location before the destination if your consumption proves greater than expected? These questions establish whether the apparent margin is meaningful. Subtracting the journey distance from the displayed range is an easy calculation, but it does not automatically produce a dependable reserve.

A navigation system that predicts battery percentage at the destination can provide a more useful starting point, particularly when it accounts for the planned route and vehicle characteristics. Such predictions may include road elevation and other available information, depending on the system. However, accuracy still has limits. Conditions can change, traffic may take an unexpected turn, and the software may rely on assumptions that do not match your actual driving. Treat the predicted arrival percentage as an estimate you can monitor during the journey. If the figure steadily declines as you travel, investigate the reason while convenient alternatives remain available. If it remains stable or improves, that is useful information too. You do not need to interrogate the display every thirty seconds as though it were withholding confidential documents. Check when the information could influence a decision.

Choosing an appropriate energy reserve is partly technical and partly practical. A ten percent battery reserve in a vehicle with a large usable battery represents a different amount of energy from ten percent in a smaller vehicle. More importantly, the significance of that reserve depends on what happens after arrival. Reaching your own driveway, where a suitable charging point is available,

presents different risks from reaching an isolated destination with uncertain charging access. Weather, traffic, and the location of alternatives also matter. This is why rules that insist every driver must arrive with exactly the same percentage are oversimplified. A sensible reserve should reflect the journey's consequences and the realistic options available if something changes. Arriving with unused electricity is not an embarrassing failure to maximise the battery. It means you still have choices.

It is equally important not to turn reasonable caution into an elaborate competition in imagining disasters. You can always construct a scenario involving an unexpected diversion, terrible weather, and several unavailable charging stations. If you insist on preparing for every conceivable combination, you may find yourself stopping unnecessarily often and travelling with a level of anxiety that makes the journey miserable. The useful distinction is between credible uncertainties and an unlimited collection of hypothetical catastrophes. A route with one crucial charging location deserves more careful preparation than a route offering numerous convenient alternatives. You can acknowledge uncertainty without assuming that every component of the transport system has secretly agreed to inconvenience you personally.

Your confidence should improve as you develop experience with your particular vehicle. A few representative journeys can reveal how it behaves under different conditions. Pay attention to actual energy consumption, distance travelled, and the accuracy of arrival predictions. Avoid drawing conclusions from a single exceptionally favourable or unfavourable trip. If possible, compare journeys with broadly similar speeds and routes, recognising that weather and traffic may still differ. You do not need to build an elaborate database. A small collection of meaningful observations is enough to develop practical expectations. Over time, you will know whether your car's displayed range tends to be optimistic under

certain conditions, whether the navigation forecast is usually useful, and which situations justify a larger margin.

One particularly important distinction concerns temporary changes in range versus lasting battery deterioration. A lower displayed estimate during winter is not, by itself, evidence that the battery has permanently lost capacity. Higher consumption, temperature effects, and different driving conditions may explain much of the change. Likewise, an unusually favourable estimate in spring does not mean the battery has recovered lost material through an unexpected act of electrical generosity. Actual battery health is a separate subject that requires appropriate measurements and interpretation. If you notice persistent abnormalities, warning messages, or behaviour that cannot reasonably be explained by conditions, follow the manufacturer's guidance and seek qualified assistance. But do not diagnose an expensive battery failure simply because the dashboard has developed a more conservative attitude toward February.

There is also a psychological adjustment involved. Drivers accustomed to conventional cars may rarely consider how far a full tank could theoretically take them. They know fuel stations are generally accessible along their usual routes, so they make decisions based on when refuelling is convenient. Electric vehicles often make energy information more prominent, creating a temptation to treat every change as significant. A highly visible number does not automatically deserve constant attention. The battery indicator should help you decide whether the next part of your journey is practical. It should not become a running commentary on your competence as a vehicle owner. You have not failed because the car predicts fewer miles than you hoped.

Before a longer trip, try separating what you know from what you are merely assuming. You know the starting charge and the route distance. You may know typical consumption from comparable journeys. You can check the availability of charging

opportunities and use a route-aware prediction where your vehicle supports one. You do not know precisely how every variable will behave over the next several hours. That final uncertainty is normal. Make a plan using realistic expectations and an appropriate reserve, then update your judgment when new information becomes available. This approach is both more reliable and less exhausting than demanding certainty from a number that was always intended to be an estimate.

The advertised range has not necessarily been stolen, concealed, or quietly donated to another customer. It belongs to a defined set of testing assumptions, while the range you experience belongs to the conditions in which you drive. Once you understand that difference, the dashboard becomes much less mysterious. Its changing estimate can offer useful information without dictating your emotional state. You can appreciate a favourable prediction without worshipping it, and respond to an unfavourable one without composing an angry letter to the engineering department.

Eventually, you may find yourself making a journey that once would have caused considerable worry. The display shows a figure below the number printed in the brochure, but you know how to interpret it. You understand the route, have considered the available energy, and can recognise when an adjustment is necessary. The trip no longer depends on persuading your car to honour its marketing materials. It depends on using the energy that is actually available. That is a much more dependable arrangement, particularly because physics has never shown much interest in customer complaints.

Chapter 2 - Where the Electricity Actually Goes, or Why Your Right Foot Has an Energy Budget

An electric car does not consume energy because it happens to be travelling a certain number of miles. It consumes energy because moving a vehicle requires work, and that work changes with the circumstances. This may sound like a distinction invented by someone who enjoys making simple subjects unnecessarily complicated, but it explains a surprising amount about everyday driving. Imagine two identical electric vehicles departing from the same location with equally charged batteries. One follows a smooth country road at a steady pace. The other travels through dense traffic, accelerates aggressively between junctions, and spends part of the journey climbing a steep hill. Even if both cover forty miles, their energy consumption may differ substantially. Distance tells you how far they travelled. It does not tell you how hard the vehicles had to work to get there.

Energy consumption is commonly expressed as kilowatt-hours per 100 kilometres, while some vehicles and markets use miles per kilowatt-hour or watt-hours per mile. These formats describe the same underlying relationship from different directions. With kWh per 100 kilometres, a lower number generally means better efficiency. With miles per kWh, a higher number means better efficiency. For example, a car averaging four miles per kilowatt-hour needs approximately 15 kWh to cover sixty miles. At three miles per kilowatt-hour, the same distance requires 20 kWh. That difference matters because every additional kilowatt-hour must come from the available battery energy or eventually be replenished. Fortunately, you do not need to become fluent in every measurement system. Learn the one displayed by your vehicle, understand which direction indicates better efficiency, and avoid

comparing numbers expressed in different units as though they were identical.

The most important influence on consumption during faster travel is often aerodynamic drag. Your car must push through the surrounding air, and the resistance rises rapidly with speed. Under comparable conditions, aerodynamic drag force increases approximately with the square of speed, while the power required to overcome it increases approximately with the cube. Total vehicle consumption does not follow either relationship exactly because other energy demands remain involved. Nevertheless, the practical consequence is unmistakable: increasing motorway speed can produce a disproportionate increase in energy consumption. You might save some driving time while requiring considerably more energy to reach the same destination. Air is wonderfully accommodating when you walk through it. At motorway speeds, it becomes a remarkably expensive travelling companion.

Consider a hypothetical vehicle that averages 3.5 miles per kWh at one cruising speed and 2.8 miles per kWh at a higher speed under otherwise comparable conditions. Over 140 miles, the first result requires 40 kWh, while the second requires 50 kWh. The additional ten kilowatt-hours could influence whether you need another charging stop, how long you spend replenishing energy, and what the journey costs. These are illustrative figures, not predictions for any particular model. The purpose is to show why a relatively modest change in efficiency becomes significant over a longer distance. At the same time, the fastest possible driving speed is rarely the only consideration. Road rules, traffic, journey deadlines, passenger comfort, and safety all matter. Driving unnecessarily slowly on a fast road can create problems of its own. Energy efficiency should influence your decisions, not overrule sensible road behaviour.

Acceleration adds another element. Electric motors often deliver immediate torque, making enthusiastic acceleration both effortless