

Electric cars power California's summer travel

By Josie Garthwaite, New York Times

It doesn't sound as sexy as the 1967 Summer of Love, but for Californians with a passion for plug-ins, the warm months of 2012 are turning into the season of the electric car.



Tesla Roadster

Some four years after the \$100,000-plus Tesla Roadster became the nation's only new electric vehicle capable of highway speeds, a wave of more affordable plug-in cars are coming to market. And California, the state with the nation's largest auto market, the worst air quality and the most stringent emissions rules, is the first to catch the tide.

By summer's end, nearly a dozen plug-in cars and crossovers may be traveling the state's highways, including five or so that are arriving before the end of August. The latest models are from upstarts like Tesla and Coda Automotive as well as from global giants like Ford and Toyota.

Aside from the state's longtime role as a trend incubator, other factors have combined to make this a test bed for what proponents hope will be a new age in personal transportation. The state's policy makers have set tough emissions rules mandating a rising number of zero-emission vehicles, and they've offered tax incentives for buyers. As a hotbed of high

technology and entertainment, California has plenty of influential early adopters with ready cash. An expanded charging infrastructure is being developed and, perhaps most important, battery-powered cars grant access to the coveted car-pool lanes on congested freeways.

Read the whole story