

Wheels Within Wheels: The Trauma of Getting from Here to There

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 04 May 2012 15:30 - Last Updated Friday, 04 May 2012 15:30

After having the, *uh*, stuffing beat out of us all week, there is finally a story to make us want to sit up straight, stand up, even cheer, launching rolls of paper streamers into the air: The land speed record has been set in Australia by a motorized toilet.

Talk about a go-kart-type vehicle with get-up-and-go: This one managed 46 miles an hour on a timed course.

Canadian stuntwoman Jolene Van Vugt, who holds various records for dirt bike stunts, told the BBC, "I flew into Australia [Tuesday] and came out here to jump straight on the toilet."

They were ticklish problems earlier, when the chain fell out of the toiletmobile, but it was quickly back in working order again.

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The temptation to end the piece right here is quite strong, allowing it to stand as a final commentary and consideration on the state of national and world affairs, but I am occasionally reminded not everyone shares my at-times dry sense of humor.

So, we will go on, under a yellow cautionary flag. □ Onward:

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In other more sedate pettifoggery, an Australian billionaire is planning on updating a classic, building Titanic II in China. The goal is to have the ship be as similar in luxurious design as possible, updated with modern technology.

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If all goes well, the ship should be ready to wreak havoc in the ice-shipping lanes by 2016. A London to New York trip is slated for later that same year.

Mining magnate Clive Palmer said of the ship, "Of course it will sink if you put a hole in it," in response to questions on whether Titanic II would sink, but he added, "It is going to be designed so it won't sink..."

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Announcement from overhead speaker: *Please discount the blur in time you are now experiencing, as our own meta-ship encounters time ripples from the original press briefing where the same was said of the original Titanic. ☐ Of course, in this time period, people were also led to believe nuclear power was absolutely safe and clean, that corporations were good citizens and fine stewards of the planet, that banks were honorable and helpful institutions, and that Cold-War-style missile fears with the Russians were forever over. ☐ Thank you for time-surfing with Kronos Timeliners -- we hope to see you again yesterday!*

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At least, the owner of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle has been found after it washed up on Canadian shores, discovered half-buried in the sand. The owner's in Japan. The two-wheeler had just completed its 4-thousand mile oceanic journey following Japan's 2011 tsunami. The rest of that debris is expected to hit beaches, from Alaska, down through Canada, and onto Washington and Oregon coastlines, for the next two years.

If you're keeping score: So far, there's been a fishing trawler, a couple volleyballs, and now, a sandy, but sea-going hog. *They get wonderful mileage -- 4 thousand miles on barely a tank!*

In Paris, a confused driver took the plunge halfway down a set of subway stairs with his car, seeking the promise of parking from an overhead sign. He braked in time to keep the car's rear wheels on the sidewalk. Same thing happened five years ago, according to a staff member in a local restaurant. Drive-throughs we know; *drive-downs* are something else -- some daily

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special!

Meanwhile, a team at Newcastle University is working to develop new technology to help older drivers stay on the road longer, helping elders beat isolation and other basic problems arising from a lack of transportation. Around 20 drivers in their 80s have taken the DriveLAB mobile lab out for a spin. A "Granny Nav" program helps chart a safe route, if asked by uncertain drivers, and eliminates the driving equivalent of our sometimes-stressful left turns.

For real stress, however, one needs to endure the roads of Colombia's capital city, Bogata, where half the roads, even main routes, are loaded with potholes. A local car club has started a drive to post pictures of road craters on Facebook, helping road warriors there pick smoother paths.

Until Bogata's roads are fixed, a toiletmobile may be a prized commodity, so to say, as well as welcome relief for endlessly-jarred, road-weary kidneys.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17922203>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17890754>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-17927045>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17829438>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-17785033>

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-17940641>