

Letter from Stanford

December 2009



This is the fourth letter from me as a visiting researcher at Center for Design Research (CDR) at Stanford.

End of the Autumn Quarter at Stanford

In December the Autumn quarter of the academic year is finished. This means that the classes end and the student have their final exams for these classes. Some student have a pretty tight schedule for the week of the final exams and the feeling of “tenta-vecka” is omnipresent. After the ‘finals’ the campus was slowly abandoned by people who were going home over the winter break.

LA Auto Show

Through my connection to the automotive industry (employed at Volvo Car Corporation) I had the opportunity to attend the Los Angeles Auto Show in December. It was interesting for me (since this was the first international auto show I have attended) to see how the different brands chose to expose themselves and what they wanted to deliver to the audience. Of course, the overall impression was that the automotive companies all wanted to show how much they care about the environment and more environmentally friendly cars were shown. A number of concept cars (not production cars) were shown but also some introductions of more “European sized” cars (cars that are already sold on the European market but are now launched at the US market).



A concept car to be revealed in the US for the first time



The press at one of the press conferences

Driving along Highway 1

As a visitor in California you are recommended to drive at least a part of Highway 1! It starts in Legget in the north and runs along the California coastline - through the Redwood Empire, San Francisco Bay Area, Central Coast including Monterey and Carmel, Los Angeles, and Orange County. On several separate occasions I have been driving along different parts of Highway 1 and always enjoy the dramatic and beautiful scenes outside the car window.



Dramatic scenic views along Highway 1 in California (this time explored by Tina (from Germany) and me)

Christmas in Palo Alto and New Years Eve in San Francisco

I spent a nice and quiet Christmas in Palo Alto. On Christmas Eve I attended, together with some CDR colleauges, the Christmas Eve Festival Eucharist service with candlelight and holiday music in the Memorial Church at Stanford. The Memorial Church was packed with people and it was very cosy and atmospheric when all the church visitors lit their candles (which were handed to us when we arrived) as we all sang Silent Night.

Preparations for Christmas in Palo Alto seems to involve a lot of decorating gardens with all sorts of lighting arrangements. Sometimes I find them beautiful and sometimes more comic, however I realise that I really missed the Swedish "adventsljustakar".

In addition to the regular Christmas decorations in Palo Alto, there is a street where they decided many years ago to have a very special Christmas tradition. At Fulton Street, a.k.a. Christmas Tree Lane, all the inhabitants provide Christmas decoration "de luxe", e.g. building a full size Christmas Crib. This results in crowds of people strolling (and a long line of cars driving) along the street to look at all the arrangements. The pictures below are taken from the website: <http://www.christmastreelane.org/> where you can find information and more examples of what you can find at Christmas Tree Lane in Palo Alto!



Examples of decorations at the Christmas Tree Lane

I spent New Years Eve at a fabulous party in an apartment in San Francisco with friends that I got to know during the autumn. There we were, celebrating the New Year, drinking something sparkling on the roof top, watching the fireworks down at the Ferry Building. Amazing!

Visit by my family!

In December my family came over to the US to see how I was doing, and to experience a bit of Stanford and California. It was really nice to be able to show my closest family where I have been spending my time these past few months! They could see first hand what I have been doing and meet the people I have gotten to know, and were able to gain a greater understanding of all the things I have told them about in my phone calls.

Bye for now ☺

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