

# Pontardawe's Handy Guide to Sustainable Space Travel.

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## 1. First Law of Architecture: Make your building come alive.

It's not just a capsule, a pod  
a tin-pot vessel,  
a sophisticated room  
to launch into space and land on the Moon.

It's a coppice of willow  
a shearing of sheep  
a billow of news from the heap  
of yesterday's papers.

It's the conversations  
while pasting on layers  
with flour  
and water  
and breaks every hour  
for toast and tea  
and a wee  
and then back to the post  
back to the art  
of constructing a spaceship  
that's built from the heart

And children take part  
slapping on goo, in paint-spattered  
noisy chattered, end-of-day shattered  
hullabaloo.

And adults throw aside caution  
and get stuck in too:

Doctors, directors and radar inspectors

Teachers and preachers  
Felters and Welders  
Carers and sharers  
and ... Swearers

People turn up, just to see this thing grow  
and when their eyes light up.  
That's when I know...  
it's ready.

## 2. WARNING: Do not ask the public to name your spaceship

“Fred the Shuttle”! Really?

“Mike”!? “John”!?

After all the work we’ve gone and done

and you want to call it “Dave”!

or “X38” or “294” or “859”

These sound more like buses

(that never run on time)

rather than something to define

this Flagship of Hope.

I can’t call it “Zippy”!

or “Buffy”!

or “Captain Minion”

and who suggested “Napoleon”?!?

We’re talking sustainable future, you know

Not the name of your pet,

“Lily Joan Collins Crawford Voisey” –

that’s tough even for a dog in the park

let alone this spark for our time

this ark, this mark of change.

It just sounds deranged

“Ms Galactical Blastastic Jones”!

This is the future of going to space

and they vote for “Luna Mc Looney face”!

So don’t let the public name your spaceship.

Knock that one on the head

and call it “Greta” instead.

### **3. Selecting your space suit.**

#### **A case study to illustrate gender bias in space travel.**

So I went to buy my spacesuit, thinking “hope I can afford to buy a decent outfit with my lottery award”.

I'd researched the conditions, and consulted suit technicians, and even wrote a detailed feasibility report.

For space is harsh and dangerous, there's no oxygen to breathe and you orbit round the planet several times at breakneck speed. With hot-cold fluctuations and deadly radiation the suit you choose has got to be the very best indeed.

But when I looked on Google, I was shocked and quite surprised the spacesuits aimed at girls were nothing like those aimed at guys: the men's suits covered everything with rubber joints and scaffolding and life supports with oxygen pressurized, remote-controlled reinforced against the cold against the dust, the scorching heat handstitched woven stainless steel with teflon caps with rubber seals and underpants to catch their wee in very little gravity.

Every thought that crossed the mind was researched, tested, and refined every hair on the head every body reclined every thousand miles forward every glance back behind every one step for man every leap for mankind.

On looking at the women's suits, I felt a bit distraught they didn't seem to match with the results of my report

I was not enthusiastic of the skin-tight use of plastic  
and I've not seen 6 inch heels on any male astronaut.

There was no life support pack, there was no remote control  
no reinforced materials to guard against the cold  
Forget the risk of asteroids, I'd worry more for hemaroids  
I felt annoyed, misunderstood  
no toughened helmet, no inner hood  
some poncy collar's not much good  
when you're stood on the moon alone  
two hundred thousand miles from home.  
I said all this to the woman on the phone  
who tried to interupt but I'd only just started  
"what about all those subatomic particles"  
and I listed all the references of various articles  
and questioned why the cleavage, mask, suspenders, whereupon  
she said "sorry love, it's just fancy dress, and that's what people want."

#### 4. Lift off.

The Speed at which you travel is equivalent to the amount of  
Imagination multiplied by your Determination to reach the moon

10 – Tonight's the night

9 – Dim the lights

8 - Glow-stars emerge to give a sense of height and dark

Orion, Gemini, Sosban Fach

7 - Max Boyce drops in to warn of the dark side, where Morgan the

Moon still resides

6 - People gather. Drink European wine

5 - Technician does inspection of the fairy lights

4 - Drummers start a rumble, check their skins are tight

3. Teddi-nauts strap on their belts and I –

2 - close the capsule, knuckles are tight

1 - Scan the controls for the one saying IGNITE

and Power

and Start

and Go go go

and the red lights' flashing

and I'm smashing through the roof

like a bullet from the gun

as the drummers are thundering

I'm suddenly alone

away from everything I've ever known

totally out of my comfort zone

I want to phone home

the thundering fades

and the world shrinks

it all disappears

as I reach the top of the atmosphere

and I sink in my seat and orbit the earth

Press the control and in a faint voice I say

"I'm floating in a most peculiar way."

## 5. NB The Moon does not have a postcode

238,000 miles later  
the Navigator  
sets down by Tycho Crater  
I step from Greta  
Time shifts to a better pace  
sound replaced by silence  
the blood thumps in my ears  
I steady my hands  
a 50 year old footprint is still in the sand.

No wind to blow it  
No water to erode it  
no volcanoes to explode it

No wisps, no mist  
No ripples, no rolls  
no fluttering patches  
no gathering storms  
no easterly gales  
moderately rough  
becoming cyclonic  
occasionally south  
No 'drizzle, then fair'  
no water no air  
No 'moderate, then Good'  
Just that first footprint  
where Armstrong once stood.

And just as he saw  
so I see now  
the full earth rising  
turning  
spinning  
whirling

in its watery blueness

A pearl

in a slow, black

crowblack

bible black

universe.



## **6. There is no 'Life on the Moon' Citizens' Test.**

So you don't need to know that Laika -  
the first dog in orbit -  
went four times round before overheating.

Or the South-Pole Aitken Crater  
is two and a half thousand kilometers wide  
13 kms deep.

You don't need to know the make of cheese.  
And how many thousand deities  
and rabbits  
and clangers live on the moon  
or that the cow jumped over it  
and the dish ran away with the spoon

Or the plans to dig it up soon:  
for helium  
because we've lost all ours by blowing up balloons.

## 7. The Universal Law of Gravitation

Every particle in the Universe, attracts every other particle in the universe – the bigger the mass, the bigger the gravitational pull.

So you go to the Moon  
for some peace and quiet  
an exit from Brexit, and somewhere to write  
but after the first night (your time)  
a visitor arrives  
“Oh I was just passing by!”  
The Moon? Yeah right!

Then five people come  
and before long  
I'm on overdrive  
“This is Greta” and “Welcome to Space”  
and “how are things... back at the Old Place?”  
And time ticks on, and more and more come  
by bus, by car, by train, by bike  
and somebody ran it!

And they all stand struck dumb  
when they look back at our planet.

Staring, staring  
at it turning turning  
Hanging like a jewel,  
pumped up and choking with fossil fuel.

So we set up a studio  
break off circular bits of moon to use as canvasses.  
A plan passes through our minds  
We gather up junk dumped in space  
cart it back - and we make art  
a chart of all the things on planet Earth:

Mountains and seashores  
forests and seasons  
day and night  
eyes  
and dragonflies  
rainbows, rugby and rockets  
curry and rice, and electrical sockets  
windmills, wombats and autumn walks  
and numbers and letters  
and schools full of books  
and colours and castles  
and bangers and mash  
and snowmen and flowers  
and oceans of fish  
and guinness  
and photosynthesis  
and photographs  
and giraffes  
and cats and dogs and pigs and frogs  
and clocks  
and foxes  
and spiders and burgers and scooters and bees  
and lovely cooked dinners and flat white coffees.

running, and music and sport for life...

and Death  
the boom boom of war  
the inequality of rich and poor  
nuclear explosions  
power stations  
and plastic in our bodies  
and plastic in our seas  
and pandas lose their habitats  
cos we're cutting down their trees  
and we're trawling the oceans

polluting the skies  
while the mountains of landfill  
continue to rise.

And we put all this down  
on our miniature disks  
and we send them to space  
into the abyss  
where they'll spin and fly  
through space and time

like travelling town criers  
distributing fliers  
hollering, bellowing  
shouting and yelling  
roaring past Mars and  
visiting Venus  
ululating at Uranus  
in a caberet, a ricochet  
out of the solar system  
out of the Milky Way  
as a message to the Universe:  
that this – all this is Planet Earth.

## **8. Newton's Law of Inertia**

An object at rest stays at rest, and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and direction unless compelled to change by forces impressed upon it.

Every politician persists in a state of not doing anything about climate change unless compelled to change by forces impressed upon them.

Nearly 2,000 arrests  
as protestors  
demand action  
to protect us  
and the planet  
from mass extinction  
to slash our carbon emissions

Doctors, teachers  
lawyers, preachers  
shopkeepers  
butchers bakes  
muslims, quakers  
monks and merrymakers  
every gender, every age  
is marching for change  
every north, south, east and west

But the government is not impressed.  
Not yet.

## 9. The way you experience Time depends on how fast you are travelling.

It's that 'end of an era' feeling  
it's that "I need a beer now" feeling  
It's the "I've been here two weeks but it feels like two years now" feeling  
(and bits of black tape are coming off the ceiling).

Yet it's also flashed past  
with that thing that time does  
Have I been here a day?  
or has it been a century?  
I strap on my belt and prepare for re-entry.

Press a few buttons and pull a few levers  
"Greta to Earth, do you receive me?"  
It's time to come back  
in the blink of an eye  
I'm shooting through black  
then I'm 80 miles high  
and Greta goes faster, tumbling like crazy  
plummeting, plunging, and upsy daisy  
twisting and blistering hissing the route  
I trigger the chute and the velocity weakens  
and now I'm above the Brecon Beacons  
follow the river down swansea valley  
and land upside down into Pontardawe.  
and crowds come to meet and say  
how was the moon  
What did you eat  
and where did you poo?  
and did you find aliens  
and did you see mars  
and isn't the universe full of dead stars?  
and have you seen god  
the mighty inventor?

And are you a fake, or just demented  
what was it like - tell the TV presenter  
and I say it was great  
like spending two weeks at a brilliant arts centre.

**10. In the quantum field, every thing is both wave and particle**  
and every possibility exists simultaneously.

So Schrodinger's Cat can be both dead and alive  
and we can be destroyed and we can survive  
and we can be arrested and we can be free  
and we can stay in a pigeonhole or we can say 'this is me.'  
and we can choose our futures and  
and we can make things change  
because everything is possible  
it's part of how we're made.

There's no one law that rules the universe  
No law that says we're wrong – if we choose  
to fight against this trajectory that we're on.

If we want to change our future and spin a different way  
we can because at the very core of us  
we're particles and waves.