

National Space Centre visit – 25 June 2015

The *Rosetta* space probe was launched on 2 March 2004, travelled 4 billion miles, and reached its destination, comet 67P, on schedule after 11 years 3 months 13 days 8 hours and 51 minutes. I left Bricket Wood on 25 June 2015, travelled 87 miles, and reached my destination at the National Space Centre in Leicester, over 1 hour late after 2 hours and 50 minutes.

Still, the *Rosetta* mission cost £1 billion and my Honda Civic is worth about £4000 so it's not really a fair comparison. The other drivers had a slightly faster journey but all 13 of us met up in the reception area albeit a bit later than planned. After some coffee/tea etc we went into the Sir Patrick Moore planetarium for a 30 minute show about the search for and possibilities of alien life. It's true to say that this was aimed more at children than adults – and this is also true for the rest of the visit. I thought that the visual presentation was superb. The entire domed ceiling was covered with computer-generated images and movies and it was a joy to behold.



There were numerous exhibits describing many aspects of the Universe as well as actual rockets and an actual Russian Soyuz space capsule. One could also take a ride inside a rocket launch simulator.

One of the displays explained the history of the SETI (Search for ExtraTerrestrial Intelligence) program and described how the public could help in the search for alien signals. Just log into *seti@home* and follow the instructions. I will be having a go.

A good day out –shame about the traffic.

Peter Altman