

Swiss solar plane completes flight across Switzerland

September 22 2010



Experimental aircraft "Solar Impulse" takes off with pilot Andre Borschberg onboard from Payerne's Swiss airbase on July 2010. Solar Impulse flew across the country Wednesday, in a new achievement following its historic 24-hour flight.

Switzerland's sun-powered plane Solar Impulse flew across the country Wednesday, in a new achievement following its historic 24-hour flight.

Air traffic was temporarily halted at Zurich international airport as [Solar Impulse](#) touched down at the end of its journey at an altitude of 150 to 300 metres (500 to 1,000 feet), and a speed of about 50 kilometres (30 miles) per hour, a spokeswoman said.

"This is a training for the team, for the airport" and air traffic controllers, said Bertrand Piccard, the Swiss adventurer who

masterminded the project.

"We wanted to show that we would not pose a major disturbance to the airport's activities," he added.

The plane remained for 45 minutes on the runway at Zurich, before taking off again on its return trip of some 270 kilometres (170 miles) to the military air base of Payerne in the west of the country.

With a wingspan that matches the Airbus A340 airliner, the plane is covered with an array of 12,000 [solar cells](#) and powered by four small electric motors.

In July it made history by flying around the clock on the sun's energy alone, using 14 hours of sunshine to power its engines and charge its batteries for the night.

It is expected to conduct its first international flights next year, before undertaking a world tour in 2013 or 2014.

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Citation: Swiss solar plane completes flight across Switzerland (2010, September 22) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-swiss-solar-plane-flight-switzerland.html>

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