

Solar plane takes off for return flight to Rabat

June 29 2012



Swiss-made Solar-powered aircraft the Solar Impulse piloted by Bertrand Piccard of Switzerland takes-off from Rabat on June 21. An experimental solar-powered plane, flying without using any fuel, took off for Rabat on a return journey after its successful flight over the Moroccan desert.

An experimental solar-powered plane, flying without using any fuel, took off Friday for Rabat on a return journey after its successful flight over the Moroccan desert, the plane's owner announced.

The Swiss-made Solar Impulse took off from Quarzazate in southern Morocco at 0733 GMT, and was expected to reach the Moroccan capital around 2200 GMT, the Solar Impulse company said.

Pilot Andre Borschberg had landed in Ouarzazate, about 550 kilometres (340 miles) from Rabat, on June 22 after having to abandon an attempt a week earlier because of strong winds and turbulence near the Atlas mountains.

That was the final stage of a trip that has taken him from his native Switzerland to Spain and then to Morocco.

The giant high-tech aircraft, which has the wingspan of a jumbo jet but weighs no more than a medium-sized car, is fitted with 12,000 [solar cells](#) feeding four electric motors driving propellers.

Last month, the solar-powered [plane](#) made the 2,500-kilometre (1,550-mile) journey from Madrid to Rabat, its longest to date and its first between continents, after an inaugural flight to Paris and Brussels last year.

The plane's next journey is set to be a return to its depart point Switzerland via Madrid.

The flights are intended as a rehearsal for the goal of a round-the-world trip in 2014 by an updated version of the plane.

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