

Solar plane leaves Morocco for Spain

July 6 2012



The Swiss-made solar-powered plane, Solar Impulse piloted by Bertrand Piccard, takes off from Rabat airport. A solar-powered aircraft left the Moroccan capital for Madrid on its return journey to its home port in Switzerland.

A solar-powered aircraft left the Moroccan capital on Friday for Madrid on its return journey to its home port in Switzerland, an AFP correspondent reported.

Piloted by Bertrand Piccard, the [Solar Impulse](#), an experimental plane which flies without fuel, took off shortly after 6:00 am (0700 GMT), heading towards Barajas airport in Madrid.

The hi-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.

Strong winds had grounded the Swiss-made aircraft in Morocco on

Tuesday, after it arrived in Rabat a week ago following a successful flight over the Moroccan desert.

It is not known exactly when it is due to return to Switzerland -- capping its first round-trip between Europe and North Africa.

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 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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