

Solar plane set for landmark round the world flight

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Emirati men stand near the Solar Impulse 2, the first solar-powered plane to be able to fly for several days and nights, on January 20, 2015 at an Abu Dhabi airport, on the sidelines of the eighth edition of the World Future Energy Summit

A plane with the top speed of a homing pigeon is set to embark on a landmark round-the-world flight using nothing but the sun's energy to power it, organisers said Tuesday.

Solar Impulse 2, the first solar-powered [plane](#) to be able to fly for several days and nights, will land in 12 destinations along its roughly

35,000 kilometre (22,000 mile) trip—including a five-day stretch above the Pacific Ocean without a drop of fuel.

"We want to demonstrate that clean technology and [renewable energy](#) can achieve the impossible," said Solar Impulse chairman Bertrand Piccard, the scion of a dynasty of Swiss scientists-cum-adventurers.

Its route, which was unveiled Tuesday in Abu Dhabi, begins in the emirate and includes stops in Oman, India, China, Hawaii and New York. It will take around 25 days of total flying time.

Although groundbreaking in its distance, the trip will not be undertaken at a lightning pace.

With flight speeds of 50-100 kilometres (30-60 miles) per hour, the entire round-the-world journey is expected to take five months to complete.

The plane is the successor of Solar Impulse, a pioneering craft which notched up a 26-hour flight in 2010, proving its ability to store enough power in lithium batteries during the day to keep flying at night.

Si2, whose makers claim it is the most energy efficient aircraft ever built, has a wider wingspan than a Boeing 747 but, thanks to its innovative design, weighs about as much as a family 4x4.



The Cockpit element of the solar-powered plane the Solar Impulse 2 is loaded to Cargolux Boeing 747 cargo aircraft on January 5, 2015 at Payerne airport

Aviation enthusiasts will be able to watch a live video stream of the plane's progress once it sets off from Abu Dhabi on its pioneering voyage, expected to begin at the end of February, on the firm's website www.solarimpulse.com .

"Solar Impulse 2 must accomplish what no other plane in the history of aviation has achieved—flying without fuel for five consecutive days and nights with only one pilot in the unpressurised cockpit," said Andre Borschberg, a former Swiss air force pilot and the company's co-founder and CEO.

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