

# Solar plane to leave Switzerland ahead of round-the-world trip

January 5 2015

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A 24m long wing element of sun-powered plane Solar Impulse 2 is loaded on a cargo aircraft on January 5, 2015, at Payerne airport in Switzerland

A sun-powered plane was loaded onto a cargo carrier in Switzerland late Monday heading for the Middle East from where it will attempt a revolutionary round-the-world trip.

The carrier transporting Solar Impulse 2 is due to leave early Tuesday

for Abu Dhabi, from where the long-winged plane will begin its record-making bid in March with the aim of completing the trip by July.

It 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.

The forerunner was put through its paces in Europe, crossed the Mediterranean to reach Morocco and traversed the United States in 2013 without using a drop of fossil fuel.

The masterminds of the project are Bertrand Piccard, the scion of a dynasty of Swiss scientists-cum-adventurers, and Andre Borschberg, a former Swiss air force pilot.

Piccard made history in 1999 by becoming the first person to fly around the world in a hot-air balloon.

The goal with Solar Impulse 2 is to fly non-stop for more than 120 hours—five days and five nights—enabling it to cross the Pacific and Atlantic legs of its global mission.

Built from carbon fibre, the 2.3-tonne plane has four 17.5-horsepower electrical motors powered by 17,248 solar cells studding its fuselage and a 72-metre (234-feet) wingspan—as long as that of an Airbus A380.



A 24m long wing element of sun-powered plane Solar Impulse 2 is loaded inside a cargo aircraft on January 5, 2015, at Payerne airport in Switzerland

The operation in March will circle the globe eastwards, making numerous stops on the way.

It will start in the Gulf, to benefit from the Middle East's low-cloud conditions.

The plane will head over the Arabian Sea to India, Myanmar and China, then cross the Pacific Ocean, the United States, the Atlantic, southern Europe and finally North Africa before returning to its point of departure.

Speed at night will be limited to 46 kilometres (28.75 miles) per hour to prevent the batteries from being run down too quickly.

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