

Solar-powered plane takes off from Oman, heads to India

March 10 2015, by Aya Batrawy



In this Monday, March 9, 2015 photo released by Solar Impulse, a Swiss solar-powered plane lands in Muscat, Oman, after it took off from Abu Dhabi early Monday, marking the start of the first attempt to fly around the world without a drop of fuel. Solar Impulse founder Andre Borschberg was at the controls of the single-seater when it took off from the Al Bateen Executive Airport. (AP Photo/Jean Revillard and Olga Stefatou, Solar Impulse)

A Swiss-made solar-powered aircraft took off just after dawn on Tuesday from Muscat, Oman, bound for India for the second leg—and

its first sea crossing—in a historic round-the-world trip.

Pilot Bertrand Piccard was at the controls of the single-seater Solar Impulse 2, which is making the 1,465-kilometer (910-mile) [journey](#) from Muscat to Ahmedabad without a drop of fuel.

It will take an estimated 16 hours of flying as it crosses over the Arabian Sea to India.

The [aircraft](#)'s wings are covered by more than 17,000 solar cells that recharge the plane's batteries. It flies ideally at around 25 knots, or 45 kph (28 mph).

On Monday, André Borschberg, who co-founded the Solar Impulse company that built the plane, flew the Si2 from Abu Dhabi, the capital of United Arab Emirates, to nearby Oman in the first leg of the epic journey.

The Swiss explorers say their aim is to highlight the importance of renewable energy and the spirit of innovation. They say the visionary journey is a "strong message for clean technologies."

Si2 is slated to make 12 stops during its 35,000-kilometer (21,700-mile) journey, including in China and Myanmar, before it crosses over the Pacific Ocean. It will then land in Hawaii and the U.S. Midwest and East Coast before flying over the Atlantic Ocean. It may also stop in southern Europe or North Africa, depending on weather conditions.

Some legs of the trip, such as over the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, will mean five days and five nights of flying solo. Both pilots have been training hard for this journey, which will span 25 flight days over five months.

The Si2 aircraft has a wingspan of 72 meters (236 feet), spanning larger than a Boeing 747 jumbo jet. At around 2,300 kilograms (5,070 pounds), the Si2 weighs about as much as a minivan or mid-sized truck. An empty Boeing 747, in comparison, weighs some 180,000 kilograms (400,000 pounds).

More information: Solar Impulse: www.solarimpulse.com

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