

Solar-powered plane leaves Hawaii (Update 2)

April 21 2016, by By Audrey Mcavoy And Caleb Jones



The Solar Impulse 2 solar plane flies out of the Kalaeloa Airport, Thursday, April 21, 2016, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar plane will fly a two-and-a-half day journey to Northern California. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

The Latest on a solar plane flying from Hawaii to California (all times local):

6:20 a.m.

After some uncertainty about the weather, the Swiss-made Solar Impulse 2 airplane has taken off from Hawaii as it continues its journey around the world.

The aircraft is heading to California as part of its circumnavigation of the globe using only energy from the sun. Its departure was delayed briefly Thursday by the wind.

The plane took off in March from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The crew landed on Oahu last July but was forced to stay in the islands after the plane's battery system sustained heat damage on its trip from Japan.



Ground crew prepare for the departure of the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane from the Kalaeloa Airport, Thursday, April 21, 2016, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The Solar

Impulse team landed in the islands in July after a record-breaking flight from Japan. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

5:30 a.m.

The Swiss-made Solar Impulse 2 airplane has left the hangar and is taxiing to the runway as it prepares for its journey from Hawaii to California.

The aircraft is heading across the Pacific as part of its circumnavigation of the globe using only energy from the sun. The aircraft took off in March from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The team has until 6:30 a.m. Thursday for the wind conditions to meet their standards for takeoff. The winds need to be less than 10 knots for the light, solar-power airplane to leave Hawaii.

The Solar Impulse team delayed their solar-powered plane's departure from Hawaii Thursday morning while they waited for the wind to subside.

The Swiss-made Solar Impulse 2 was preparing to leave Hawaii to continue its circumnavigation of the globe using only energy from the sun. The aircraft took off in March from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, then made stops in Oman, Myanmar, China and Japan.

The crew landed in Hawaii last July but was forced to stay in the islands after the plane's battery system sustained heat damage on its trip from Japan.

The plane, now preparing for the ninth leg of its journey, hopes to finish its trip across the Pacific and land in Mountain View, California, in about three days. Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard suited up early Thursday for his three-day voyage from Hawaii to California. The team had until 6:30 a.m. Thursday to leave the hangar and still be able to take advantage of a full day's sun.

The National Weather Service in Honolulu says winds at the airport are variable, which is about as light as they will get. They expect the winds to pick up slightly as the sun comes up.

Piccard said the idea of crossing the ocean in a solar powered plane a few years ago stressed him out, but Thursday morning he was confident things would go according to plan.



Solar Impulse 2 pilots Bertrand Piccard, left, and Andre Borschberg speak to the media in front of the solar plane from the Kalaeloa Airport, Thursday, April 21, 2016, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The Solar Impulse team landed in the islands in July after a record-breaking flight from Japan. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

Piccard also said the flight's destination, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is fitting. He said on his way to the airfield that when the plane lands there, it will land "in the middle of the pioneering spirit."

Piccard's co-pilot Andre Borschberg, who flew the leg from Japan to Hawaii, told Piccard he greatly admires his dedication and strength.

He said the plane "represents what we could do on the ground in our communities, in our cities."



The Solar Impulse 2 solar plane is moved out of the hangar to prepare for a dawn lift off at the Kalaeloa Airport, Thursday, April 21, 2016, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar-powered plane that has been grounded in Hawaii since July plans to resume its round-the-world voyage on Thursday. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

The team was delayed in Asia, as well. When first attempting to fly from Nanjing, China, to Hawaii, the crew had to end their trip early and divert to Japan because of unfavorable weather and a damaged wing.

A month later, when the weather conditions were right, the plane departed from an airport in Nagoya in central Japan for Hawaii.

The trans-Pacific leg was the riskiest part of the plane's global travels, as there was nowhere for it to land in an emergency. The same is true for the trip from Hawaii to the U.S. mainland.

The plane's ideal flight speed is about 28 mph, though that can double during the day when the sun's rays are strongest. The carbon-fiber aircraft weighs more than 5,000 pounds, or about as much as a minivan or midsize truck.

The wings of Solar Impulse 2, which stretch wider than those of a Boeing 747, are equipped with 17,000 solar cells that power propellers and charge batteries. The plane runs on stored energy at night.

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