

Solar-powered plane slowly soaring from Hawaii to California

April 22 2016



The Solar Impulse 2 solar plane flies into the sunrise out of 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)

A solar-powered plane on an around-the-world journey was about a third of the way to California early Friday after taking off from Hawaii, the project's mission control said.

Solar Impulse 2 pilot Bertrand Piccard called out the sunrise after cruising over the north Pacific on battery power during darkness, according to a livestream from a website documenting the journey.

"Absolutely fantastic moment ... That's a sunrise I will remember all my life," he said.

The plane was cruising over the cold northern Pacific on Friday—Earth Day—an occasion the team planned to mark with a live call between Piccard and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The trans-Pacific leg is the riskiest part of the plane's global travels due to the lack of emergency landing sites.

After some uncertainty about winds, the plane took off from Hawaii Thursday morning and was on course to land in Mountain View, California, over the weekend. The crew that helped it take off was clearing out of its Hawaiian hangar and headed for the mainland for the weekend arrival.

At one point passengers on a Hawaiian Air jet caught a glimpse of the Solar Impulse 2 before the airliner sped past the slow-moving aircraft.



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 Solar Impulse 2 landed in Hawaii in July and was forced to stay in the islands after the plane's battery system sustained heat damage on its trip from Japan.

The aircraft started its around-the-world journey in March 2015 from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, and made stops in Oman, Myanmar, China and Japan. It's on the ninth leg of its circumnavigation.

Piccard, said the destination in the heart of Silicon Valley is fitting, as the plane will land "in the middle of the pioneering spirit." Piccard's co-

pilot Andre Borschberg flew the leg from Japan to Hawaii.



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)

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

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

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 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.



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)



A Hawaiian hula dancer performs for the Solar Impulse 2 pilots Andre Borschberg, left and Bertrand Piccard, center, during a departure ceremony at the Kalaeloa Airport, Thursday, April 21, 2016, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar plane will attempt to depart Hawaii for California today. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



In this Thursday, April 21, 2016 file photo, the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane lifts off at the Kalaeloa Airport, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar plane on an around-the-world journey has reached the point of no return over the Pacific Ocean after departing Hawaii, and now it's California or bust. The plane was cruising over the cold northern Pacific late Thursday at about 20,000 feet with a nearly-full battery as night descended, according to the website that's documenting the journey of Solar Impulse 2. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia, File)



Solar Impulse 2 pilot Bertrand Piccard prepares to fly across the Pacific in a solar plane from 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)



In this Thursday, April 21, 2016 file photo, the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane flies out of the Kalaeloa Airport, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar plane on an around-the-world journey has reached the point of no return over the Pacific Ocean after departing Hawaii, and now it's California or bust. The plane was cruising over the cold northern Pacific late Thursday at about 20,000 feet with a nearly-full battery as night descended, according to the website that's documenting the journey of Solar Impulse 2. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia, File)



Ground crew pulls the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane on to the runway for a dawn lift off at 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)



In this Thursday, April 21, 2016 file photo, the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane flies out of the Kalaeloa Airport, in Kapolei, Hawaii. The solar plane on an around-the-world journey has reached the point of no return over the Pacific Ocean after departing Hawaii, and now it's California or bust. The plane was cruising over the cold northern Pacific late Thursday at about 20,000 feet with a nearly-full battery as night descended, according to the website that's documenting the journey of Solar Impulse 2. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia, File)

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