

Solar plane pilot hopes to link to Silicon Valley's spirit

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The Solar Impulse 2 solar plane flies into the sunrise out of Kalaheo 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 pilot of a solar-powered airplane on an around-the-world journey said Saturday that stopping in California's Silicon Valley will help link the daring project to the pioneering spirit of the area.

Pilot Bertrand Piccard, who left Hawaii three days ago, said he hopes to fly over San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge before landing in Mountain View on Saturday night.

"Can you imagine crossing the Golden Gate Bridge on a solar-powered [plane](#) just like ships did in past centuries? But the plane doesn't make noise and doesn't pollute," Piccard said a live video feed on the website documenting the journey.

"It's a priority to link the project we have with the pioneering spirit in Silicon Valley," he added.

The project's website says the Solar Impulse 2 aircraft is 2 days and 4 hours into a three-day flight over the Pacific.

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.

On Friday, Piccard exchanged pleasantries with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who hailed Piccard's pioneering spirit as "inspirational," telling him he was making history.



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)

Piccard responded that Ban, too, was making history by having just presided over the signing of a climate agreement supported by representatives of 175 nations.

"What you are doing today in New York, signing the Paris agreement, is more than protecting the environment, it is the launch of the clean technology revolution," Piccard said.

The trans-Pacific leg of his journey is the riskiest part of the [solar plane](#)'s global travels because of the lack of emergency landing sites.



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)

After uncertainty about winds, the plane took off from Hawaii on Thursday morning. 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 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.



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's co-pilot Andre Borschberg flew the leg from Japan to Hawaii.

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 45 kph, or 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.

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