

Solar plane slowly soaring from Hawaii to California

April 22 2016, by By Audrey Mcavoy And Caleb Jones



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 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.

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

Pilot Bertrand Piccard is flying this leg of the journey.

"We have passed the point of no return," the team wrote on the website. "From this point onwards, Bertrand Piccard will only be moving forward with Si2."

At one point the plane was passed by a Hawaiian Air jet whose passengers caught a glimpse of the Solar Impulse 2 before the powerful airliner left the slow-moving aircraft behind.

The aircraft 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 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 aircraft started its 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.

Pilot Bertrand Piccard, who is flying the latest leg of the trip, said the idea of crossing the ocean in a [solar-powered plane](#) a few years ago stressed him out, but Thursday he was confident things would go according to plan.

Piccard also said the destination in the heart of Silicon Valley is fitting. He said on his way to the airfield that the plane will land "in the middle

of the pioneering spirit."



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)

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."

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.



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

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

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.



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)

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.



In this Thursday, April 21, 2016 file photo, the Solar Impulse 2 solar plane lifts off at the Kalaheo 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)



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)



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)



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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