

Solar-powered plane completes journey across Pacific Ocean (Update)

April 24 2016



Solar Impulse 2 lands at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., after crossing the Pacific Ocean on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

A solar-powered airplane on a mission to fly around the world landed in California, completing a risky, three-day flight across a great expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

Pilot Bertrand Piccard landed the Solar Impulse 2 in Mountain View, in the Silicon Valley south of San Francisco, at 11:45 p.m. Saturday following a 62-hour, nonstop solo flight from Hawaii without fuel. The plane taxied into a huge tent at Moffett Airfield where Piccard was greeted by the project's team.

"You know there was a moment in the night, I was watching the reflection of the moon on the ocean and I was thinking 'I'm completely alone in this tiny cockpit and I feel completely confident.' And I was really thankful to life for bringing me this experience," Piccard said at a news conference after he landed. "It's maybe this is one of the most fantastic experiences of life I've had."

The landing came hours after Piccard made a fly-by over the Golden Gate Bridge as spectators below watched the narrow aircraft with extra wide wings.

Piccard and fellow Swiss pilot Andre Borschberg have been taking turns flying the plane on an around-the-world trip since taking off from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, in March 2015. It made stops in Oman, Myanmar, China, Japan and Hawaii.



Solar Impulse 2 pilots Bertrand Piccard, left, and Andre Borschberg celebrate after Piccard landed their solar-powered plane at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

The trans-Pacific legs were the riskiest part of the plane's travels because of the lack of emergency landing sites.

The aircraft faced a few bumps along the way.

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 team was delayed in Asia, too. 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 pilot Bertrand Piccard looks out his cockpit window shortly after landing at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

A month later, with better weather conditions, the plane left 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 over 5,000 pounds, about as much as a midsize truck.

The plane's wings, 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.



André Borschberg, co-founder of the Solar Impulse project, speaks with reporters after Bertrand Piccard landed Solar Impulse 2 at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The plane, which is on an around-the-world journey, arrived from Hawaii after crossing the Pacific Ocean. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

Solar Impulse 2 will make three more stops in the United States before crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Europe or northern Africa, according to the website documenting the journey.

"The adventure continues," Piccard said. "The story is not finished."

The project, which is estimated to cost more than \$100 million, began in 2002 to highlight the importance of renewable energy and the spirit of innovation.



Pilot Bertrand Piccard emerges from Solar Impulse 2 at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016, after crossing the Pacific Ocean. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

"I think innovation and pioneering must continue," Piccard said. "It must continue for better quality of life, for clean technologies, for renewable energy. This is where the pioneers can really express themselves and be successful."

Solar-powered air travel is not yet commercially practical, given the slow travel time, weather and weight constraints of the aircraft.

"Maybe it will be boring in 20 years when all the airplanes will be electric and people will say 'Oh it's routine.' But now, today, an airplane that is electric, with electric engines, that produces its own energy with

the sun, it can never be boring," Piccard said.



Solar Impulse 2 pilots Bertrand Piccard, left, and Andre Borschberg speak with reporters after their solar-powered plane landed at Moffett field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Bergeq



Solar Impulse 2 pilots Bertrand Piccard, right, and Andre Borschberg celebrate after Piccard landed their solar-powered plane at Moffett Field in Mountain View, Calif., on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane landed in California on Saturday, completing a risky, three-day flight across the Pacific Ocean as part of its journey around the world. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)



Solar Impulse 2 flies over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane, which is attempting to circumnavigate the globe to promote clean energy and the spirit of innovation, arrived from Hawaii after a three-day journey across the Pacific Ocean. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)



Solar Impulse 2 flies over San Francisco, Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane, which is attempting to circumnavigate the globe to promote clean energy and the spirit of innovation, arrived from Hawaii after a three-day journey across the Pacific Ocean. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)



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Solar Impulse 2 flies over San Francisco before landing at Moffett Field on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The solar-powered airplane, which is attempting to circumnavigate the globe to promote clean energy and the spirit of innovation,

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