

World's First Solar Plane - Solar Impulse

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A **solar powered plane**, **Solar Impulse** took off for its maiden flight on April 7, 2010 in Payerne, Switzerland. The plane lifted off from a military airport at the pace of a fast bicycle, not faster than 28 mph (45 kmph), after briefly accelerating down the runway. Villagers watched it gaining altitude above the fields and eventually fading into the horizon. During its maiden 90 minute flight, it completed a series of turns by gently tilting its black-and-white wings, which are as wide as those of a 747 jumbo jet. It climbed nearly a mile above the Swiss countryside. The weather was sunny and there was little wind. Engineers on the \$93.5 million project had been conducting short tests since December 2009.



They had, hitherto, taken the plane not higher than 2 feet and flown not more than 1,000 feet in distance. A night flight is planned before July 2010 and then, a second plane will be built. That plane will be meant for the round-the-world flight planned for 2012.

In this flight Solar Impulse reached an altitude of 5,500 feet. Its test pilot was Markus Scherdel. The plane landed very safely and gently after the test flight.

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