

'Majestic' WWII Spitfire takes off on round-the-world flight

August 5 2019, by Robin Millard



The 43,500-kilometre (27,000-mile) adventure westwards around the globe will be the first time a Spitfire will ever have circumnavigated the planet

An original Spitfire plane took off from Britain on Monday on an unprecedented attempt to fly the iconic World War II fighter around the

globe.

The gleaming silver aircraft set off from Goodwood Aerodrome outside Chichester near the south coast of England for the first leg of the epic four-month journey.

The restored 76-year-old fighter served in World War II but has been demilitarised, stripped of its guns and paintwork, revealing the shining, silvery aluminium underneath.

The Silver Spitfire was heading for Lossiemouth in Scotland on the first stage of its attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean via the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and the wilds of remote northern Canada.

The single-seater plane will visit around 30 countries and soar over some of the world's most cherished landmarks.

British aviators Matt Jones and Steve Brooks are taking turns at the controls for some 90-odd legs on its 43,500-kilometre (27,000-mile) adventure westwards around the globe—the first time a Spitfire will ever have circumnavigated the planet.

"I'm nervous and beginning to get excited," Jones told AFP, standing beside the plane, shortly before take-off.

"We're going to see so many people and so many countries. I hope it's successful and we get back. We want to show this plane off to the world."



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Sandwich, cuppa, chocks away

Jones, 45, flew the first leg, with Brooks, 58, following in the support plane.

In the hangar, Brooks warmed up for the expedition with a bacon sandwich and a coffee in a British flag mug.

"Bacon sarnie. Absolutely essential," he told AFP.

"We've been training for this for so long. I can't wait to go.

"It's all about sharing the greatest aeroplane ever built. It's about inspiring the next generation. Life is tough and the Spitfire seems to symbolise that willingness to overcome against all odds."

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