



# Pipistrel Round the World Flight gets some NZ help

**THE** Pipistrel Green Light World Flight landed in New Zealand at the start of March. This is a solo around the world adventure flight in a Pipistrel Virus SW914, being made by Matevz Lenarcic. Covering more than 50 countries (New Zealand was number 35), Matevz aims to “Fly the lightest 3-axis aircraft (290kg) around the World westbound, burn the smallest amount of fuel per distance flown, and make the nicest book about World Waters.” During the trip, Matevz will cover 80,000km, cross the equator 6 times, fly over 7 continents, 120 National Parks, 3 oceans, the Antarctic, Mount Everest, and more.

Matevz is an IFR rated PPL holder who has previously flown around the world in an easterly direction. He holds various records and awards and has published 11 books. His flight this time will highlight the “very different faces of water and warn the world that lack of water brings even more tension to society than the oil trade.” As well as many photographs, atmospheric readings are being taken to show atmospheric contamination from biomass and fossil fuel combustion.

Matevz is undertaking a great adventure and is of course supported by Pipistrel, many sponsors, and many other people along the way. His website [www.worldgreenflight.com](http://www.worldgreenflight.com) is well worth visiting.

One of his helpers has been Colin Alexander from Solo Wings at Tauranga, who made an urgent dash to Tahiti to address issues with the Pipistrel’s Rotax 914 engine possibly resulting from fuel contamination, before Matevz continued his journey to New Zealand (beating Colin home to Tauranga in fact). His trip here from the Cook Islands wasn’t the most pleasant, says Matevz; “In the morning the weather was okay but only about an hour after I took off, it spoiled again so I was flying in clouds and with the help of Domen (Matevz’s full time weather watcher and flight planner) I was able to get some orientation. Domen was planning the flight with the help of satellite images through the cold front on its narrow point. Still, the rain was terrible and flying very demanding. Five hours later the weather improved, but then I was hit by strong head winds, which prolonged the flight for at least two hours!”

After Matevz arrived in Tauranga, Colin was able to fully service the aircraft before Matevz continued on his journey across the Tasman to Australia.

*Colin picks up the story to tell of his part in Matevz’s adventure:*

My involvement began when I received a call from the Pipistrel factory to advise that Matevz was having engine trouble for a number of hours before landing in Tahiti. Because I was the nearest person familiar with Rotax 914 Turbo engines, they requested that I please proceed to Tahiti to assist. This all occurred at 10:00 on Sunday morning. On checking flights, there was only one flight out which required me to be at Auckland International by 12:50. With incredible urgency, I packed my tools while Norma purchased an airline ticket and then I had to try to get to Auckland in time. I managed to hitch a ride to Ardmore with Ross McInch in his RV7 and caught a cab to the airport arriving just in time for Air Tahiti.

I was met by Matevz at Papeete International just after 22:00 that evening. It was a real thrill for me to meet this great adventurer.

The next morning we were up early and ready to start work

on his aircraft. The first challenge was getting across the main runway to the hangar where the Pipistrel was stored and we had to go through all sorts of security checks. On arrival at the open ended hangar, I arranged my tools to begin work. The first major problem was mosquitos. My legs went black with the little \*\*stars and I could not stand still. We eventually got some coils to light and placed them around the engine. (It was great to be working on the fuel system while we had smouldering coils underneath.)

We had to go through the entire fuel system as Matevz believed that he picked up contamination from the fuel he had sent to Antarctica and the South Pacific Islands. The 914 has two carbs as



Colin Alexander with Matevz Lenarcic at Tauranga.

well as electronic throttle position sensors etc. and this whole lot was tightly packed into a very small engine compartment under the coolant radiator.

It was stressful knowing that I was carrying out critical work on this aircraft without having the benefit of a check flight as the aircraft was too heavy with fuel and it was not desirable to land at this weight. After completing all the work and re-tuning as well as replacing fuel filters located inside the cockpit, we ran the engine and all went well. From an engineering perspective, I had to check and recheck as I did not have the benefit of our own organisation where crosschecks can be performed. It is a huge responsibility doing this sort of task and

then sending the pilot out to cross oceans and I felt it.

The daily temperature was about 36 degrees so it was a hot and sweaty job, but we went home that evening satisfied that the aircraft was ready for its flight to the Cook Islands and then to Auckland.

Early the next morning Matevz climbed aboard and warmed the engine up while waiting for his clearances. We watched him take off and I can’t explain how I felt as he started over the ocean. I spent the morning tracking him on Spidertracks and felt better when he arrived at the Cooks.

I then had to wait until the next flight from Tahiti which arrived in Auckland on Thursday. By the time I reached Tauranga, Matevz had arrived and his aircraft servicing was already half completed by Saul and Phil in our workshop. He stayed with Norma and I during his short time in NZ. (sadly the weather was shocking) before Customs came to the hangar on Sunday and Matevz departed at about 08:00. It was really odd listening to a pilot asking for a departure direct on track to the Gold Coast from NZTG.

Matevz is an amazing and organised person. He comes across as an all-round good sort who has managed his risks very well. As far as safety equipment on board is concerned, he of course has his Spider as well as a satellite phone and portable PLB and GPS already in a watertight bag. He has a provisioned 4 man life raft including a water desalinating plant. He has all weather gear including a survival suit that will tolerate minus 40 degrees Celsius. While he is flying, he listens to music put together by his kids and receives information from his Flight Planner in Europe who helps him navigate around most bad weather. His major regret here was not being able to fly around Mount Cook and get some photos.

It has been a great privilege to be asked to work on his aircraft and our Solo Wings organisation is thrilled that we have been able to ensure that this brave adventurer can continue on his way. We wish him all the very best.

**Colin Alexander**

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