



THE EARTHROUNDERS.

The Earthrounders is a non-profit, informal group of pilots who have flown around the globe in light GA (General Aviation) aircraft. The aim is to record all known flights around the world, to help and encourage pilots interested in this type of flying, and to foster friendship amongst pilots.

'Out of the 7.4 billion people on Earth, 4 000 people have climbed Mount Everest, 500 have been in Space, while only around 700 pilots flew around the world in light aircraft.'

History

The idea of holding a meeting of pilots who have flown around the world was originally the idea of the late Hans Gutmann of Vienna, Austria, after Claude Meunier of Australia visited him in 1998.

They had both flown around the World in 1996, flying almost the same route, and almost at the same time, without knowing each other. Gutmann flew his amateur-built Glasair aeroplane OE-CGH, and Meunier flew his Piper Aerostar VH-XRD.

Researching material for writing a book on solo flights around the World, (a book that was never written), Meunier took a 'round-the-world 'airline tour, meeting all the pilots he knew at the time who had flown around the world. During this flight, he met with helicopter pilot Ron Bower in Austin Texas, Gaby

Kennard in California, the only Australian female pilot having flown around the world, Don Taylor in California, the first home-built aircraft around the world, Dieter Schmitt in Frankfurt, Sheik Al Thani in Dubai who had flown twice around the world in a Seneca and then in an Aerostar, Julian Nott in New York who directed him to the parent of the late Judith Chisholm living in France and finally Hans Gutmann in Vienna. And it is in a famous Vienna restaurant, eating the iconic schnitzels, that the idea came of having a meeting of pilots having flown around the world and the idea, like all great ideas, was scratched on a paper napkin on a restaurant table.

Gutmann suggested Oshkosh, Wisconsin during the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) air show in two years time, as the first reunion. They got in touch with Margi Moss, a British lady living in Brazil. She had, with husband Gérard, flown around the World in 1989, in a Brazilian Saranejo, being the first light aircraft to cross the Pacific Ocean on the southern route. She joined the two men, and located and invited some 50 pilots.

Tom Pobersny of the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) was very enthusiastic. The EAA offered a stand and gave a meal and a trailer of beer.

At the end of this first gathering, Gutmann invited them to Vienna in 2001 during the centenary of the Austrian Aero club. It should be noted that Austria had an aero club well before the first flight of the Wright Brothers. That first meeting was a success and it was decided to have regular meetings. Meunier was to host the next meeting in Perth in 2003 where five crews flew all the way around the World to attend the meeting.

Sadly, Gutmann was killed in an aircraft accident over the Italian Apennines on June 19, 2011.

Meetings

Subsequent meetings:

2001: Vienna, Austria, hosted by the late Hans Gutmann.

2003: Perth, Australia, hosted by Claude Meunier.

2005: Mexico City, Mexico, hosted by Jorge and Malu Cornish.

2008: Johannesburg, South Africa, hosted by Dorise Hettlich, the widow of Earthrounder Dr. Frank Heittlich, and her daughters.

2010: Brasilia, Brazil, hosted by Margi and Gerard Moss.

2012: Orlando, Florida, USA, hosted by Bob and Dan Gannon.
2014: Saint Petersburg, Russia, hosted by Sergey Terekhin.
2016: Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea, hosted by Bob Bates.
2018: Zhenzhou, China, hosted by the late Wei Chen.
2020: Switzerland, postponed due to the Corona Virus pandemic.
2021: The next meeting will hopefully take place in Switzerland to be hosted by Daniel Ramseier of Handiflight, a group of handicapped pilots Handiflight.com.

Plaques are presented at the meetings to those pilots who have flown around the world since the previous meeting.

At the end of each of these meetings, the Earthrounders flag is handed over to the host of the next meeting.

Rules

To be accepted as an Earthrounder, a pilot must fly around the globe in an aircraft of less than 7 500 kg. This aircraft weight being considered a 'light aircraft'. The flight must end at the point of departure, with all meridians being crossed, except for polar flights. It is not a requirement to cross the Equator, but the flight must take place between the two Polar circles (N 66° 33' and S 66° 33'). A short flight around the North Pole is not accepted. All legs around the world have to be flown. When not a solo flight, at least one pilot is required to remain on board for the entire circumnavigation. Contrary to the FAI rules (Fédération Aéronautique Internationale) there is no minimum distance to be flown, nor is there a time limit to achieve the flight. (Link: www.fai.org).

At the request of the Earthrounders, the FAI has created a Circumnavigator Diploma.

Non-qualifying flights:

Some flights do not meet the criteria but still show some merit and are listed separately in the 'non-qualifying category'. Example: In the case of light aircraft not having the range to cross long over-water legs and having to be freighted across the Ocean.

The Earthrounders Internet Site:

During the initial meeting at Oshkosh in 2000, the EAA offered a page on their Internet Site. Meunier thanked them, preferring to create his own site. This was achieved in 2000. The site gives news of impending flights, and of departures and completion of flights around the world. Also listed are commercial firms specialising in getting clearances and permits to fly over foreign countries. All known flights are listed by their categories: single engines, multi-engines, helicopters, lighter than the air, and home-built aircraft. Any information on flying conditions as supplied by Earthrounders themselves, is published. Books written by Earthrounders are listed and reviewed.

The Site is also a source of news and is a link between Earthrounders members.

The Site is well visited with more than 100 visits per day.

The Earthrounder Database:

This 'Earthrounders Database' is a MYSQL relational DB, more than 600 flights around the world where all known Earthrounders flights around the World are recorded.

It can be searched by:

The Name of the Pilot(s)

The Year of the flight

The Nationality of the Pilot

The Tail Number of the aircraft

The Brand of the Aircraft

The Route of the flight

The Pacific crossing

The Class of aircraft and finally

The Flight Number as given within the Database.

The Database is an important part of the Earthrounders Internet Site.

It is accessible from any page of the Earthrounders Site:

http://www.earthrounders.com/db_new.php

All information is only published after receiving the full approval of the pilots.

Links:

Earthrounders site: <https://www.earthrounders.com>

Fédération Aéronautique Internationale: www.fai.org

Handiflight: <https://handiflight.com/en/>