

Bertrand Piccard

Serial explorer, psychiatrist and ambassador for clean technologies combining innovation and adventure to tackle the great challenges of our time



It is in Bertrand Piccard's DNA to go beyond the obvious and achieve the impossible. From a legendary lineage of explorers who conquered the stratosphere and the abysses, he made history by accomplishing two aeronautical firsts, around the world non-stop in a balloon, and more recently in a solar plane without fuel. Pioneer in his way to consider ecology through the lens of profitability, he began working in the early 2000s to promote renewable energies and clean technologies. Solar Impulse was born to carry this message around the world.

His dual identity as a psychiatrist and explorer makes him an influential voice heard by the largest institutions which today consider him as a forward-thinking leader on the themes of innovation and sustainability. Founder and Chairman of the Solar Impulse Foundation, he has succeeded with his team to select 1000 efficient solutions to protect the environment in a profitable way. In a third round-the-world tour, he will bring them to decision-makers in order to help them meet their environmental targets while ensuring clean economic growth.

Visionary behind Solar Impulse, Bertrand demonstrated, with his landing in 2016 after 43,000 km travelled without fuel, that renewable energies and energy efficiency can achieve incredible feats – reinforcing the idea that it will be easier to protect the environment with a broader use of modern clean technologies, than by fighting against societal trends in mobility, comfort and growth.

Together with his wife Michèle, he conceived the Solar Impulse project as a now widely recognized platform to raise public awareness and encourage political actions in favor of clean technologies. Thanks to this airplane of unlimited endurance, he has become a convincing ambassador, and is regularly invited to express his vision at major international conferences on innovation, energy, environment and technology.

“We need to embrace clean technologies and efficient solutions, because they are much more than ‘ecological,’ they are ‘logical’. They create jobs and generate profit, while also reducing CO₂ emissions and preserving natural resources. Even if climate change didn’t exist, they would make sense. Clean growth is much better than the dirty status quo we have today.”

Bertrand’s thirst for exploration is the continuation of a family legacy, passed down through three generations of inventors who dedicated their lives to scientific adventure and protection of the environment. First, there was Auguste Piccard who opened the way for modern aviation with the first-ever stratospheric flight in the pressurized capsule that he invented. Later, it was Jacques Piccard who pioneered scientific ecology by discovering traces of life during the historic dive with his bathyscaphe to the deepest point of the ocean, the Mariana Trench.

Inspired during his childhood, where he also rubbed shoulders with most of the astronauts of the American moon program, Bertrand developed an insatiable curiosity for pushing limits and became a serial explorer. As a young man, he pioneered the early development of hang-gliding and ultra-light flying in Europe, won the Transatlantic Balloon Race, and achieved the first-ever nonstop round-the-world balloon flight on board Breitling Orbiter 3, completing the longest unrefueled flight in the history of aviation for both distance and duration. During the 20 days of this circumnavigation, together with English co-pilot Brian Jones, Bertrand feared he would fall short of propane and promised himself to make another round-the-world flight, this time without any fuel. Solar Impulse was born from this commitment.

This passion for exploration was brought to new levels as a medical doctor and psychiatrist, when he searched for alternative therapeutic solutions in hypnosis, oriental approaches and Taoism. This practice came full circle, as Bertrand used hypnosis to increase his level of vigilance and manage fatigue when he was for days at the controls of his balloon and later of the Solar Impulse airplane.

Bertrand encourages others to reject common assumptions, to adopt a solution-oriented approach and to take on challenges with the spirit of a pioneer. His insights as an explorer and a medical doctor give him a unique perspective on man’s psychological capabilities and the way to manage change and crisis. His track record brings credibility to his guidance, as he challenges others to embrace new ways of thinking. He is a born communicator, respected not only for achieving lofty goals but also demonstrating the steps needed to achieve them. For more than two decades, he has shared his experience in inspirational speeches for corporate and public audiences on topics such as achieving the impossible, developing creativity and innovation, managing crisis, teamwork and communication. For this pioneer free from dogmas, exploration is a state of mind. Bertrand believes that one must change altitude in the winds of life by dropping the weight of certitudes in order to find better directions. As he says, “Performance and success come from using doubts and question marks to stimulate our creativity.”

Referred to as the “Inspioneer,” he has become an influential voice that is heard within the most distinguished institutions across the globe, like the United Nations, European Institutions, World Climate summits, the World Economic Forum, TED and many national governmental bodies. A trusted adviser and influencer for the development of new societal solutions, he

“Adventure in the 21st Century consists of using human ingenuity and the pioneering spirit to develop the quality of life that present and future generations deserve to have.”

1958

Born March 1st, in Lausanne (Switzerland)

1986

Medical doctor

1996

Doctor specialized in psychiatry and psychotherapy for adults and children; specialized in hypnosis

1974 & 1985

Pioneer of hang-gliding and microlight flying in Europe; European hang-glider aerobatics champion

1992

Winner of the first transatlantic balloon race Chrysler Challenge

1994 to 1999

Initiator and Captain of the Breitling Orbiter project. First non-stop round-the-world balloon flight

1999 & 2000 to today

Initiator and Chairman of the Winds of Hope Foundation and the NoNoma Federation

2000 to 2012

United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Population Fund UNFPA

2003 to 2016

Initiator, Chairman and Pilot of the Solar Impulse project. First round-the-world solar flight

2015 to today

United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Environmental Program UNEP

2016 to today

Initiator and Chairman of the Solar Impulse Foundation. Launch of the 1000 Solutions Challenge

has been appointed Champion of the Earth and United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Environment.

The inspiration he received as a child from explorers gives him the desire to also inspire younger generations in return.

Bertrand's success comes in part from his ability to build bridges between extremes to develop synergies where others see oppositions. First with Solar Impulse, Bertrand promotes the reconciliation of ecology and economy. He also acknowledges that sustainability is not limited to the environment and therefore he is actively committed to humanitarian causes. Bertrand chairs the Winds of Hope Foundation that he co-founded with Brian Jones and Breitling after the round-the-world balloon flight. Through this organization, he created the "No-Noma International Federation" to coordinate the eradication of Noma, a disease associated to extreme poverty, caused by malnutrition and lack of hygiene.

Also an author, Bertrand is able to bring to life his experiences through writing. He wrote several best sellers and aims to use his pen as a tool to inspire readers to greatness in their own lives.

Today, after the success of the first solar flight around the world, it is therefore quite naturally that Bertrand took this "first for energy" further, and succeeded in the second phase of his vision with a new bold action to make what was possible in the air, possible on the ground: selecting 1000 solutions that protect the environment in a profitable way. Promoting clean and profitable solutions that are "logical" more than just "eco-logical", Bertrand demonstrates with the Solar Impulse Foundation the opportunities that lie in solving climate change. To achieve this challenge, he created the World Alliance for Efficient Solutions to federate startups, research labs and larger corporations who have products, processes and services that are both clean and profitable, and developed a label which, for the first time, is being given to certify the financial profitability of environmental actions. Bertrand will then personally embark in a third round-the-world journey to deliver those solutions to decision-makers, a way to help them go beyond compromise and adopt more modern legal frameworks to allow a clean economic growth.

Together with his wife Michèle, Bertrand resides in Lausanne, Switzerland, and has three children.

Awards and Honors

Champion of the Earth, 2012

Grand Prix of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences

Olympic Order (IOC)

Officer of the Legion of Honor
France

Officer of the Order of Alawites
Morocco

Officer of the Order of Leopold
Belgium

Commander of the Order Adolphe de Nassau
Luxembourg

Knight of the Order of Saint Charles
Monaco

Aeronautics Medal
France

Gold Medal for Youth and Sports, gold class
France

Gold Medal of the International Aeronautical Federation –FAI

Hubbard Medal of the National Geographic Society

Gold Medal of the Explorers' Club

Academic Distinctions

Honoris Causa Doctor for Science, Technology and Letters in Cranfield, Fribourg, Geneva, Mons, Leuven and Silesian Universities

Publications

«Objectif Soleil» with André Borschberg
Editions Stock 2017

«Changer d'altitude»
Editions Stock – best-seller in 2014

«Around the World in 20 Days» with Brian Jones
Wiley Editions, New York – best-seller in 1999

«Une Trace dans le Ciel»
Editions Favre 2005

EXPLORATION

Pioneer of hand gliding and ultralight flying in Europe
European Hang-Glider Aerobatics Champion in 1985

Winner of the first transatlantic balloon race
Chrysler Challenge in 1992

Initiator of the Breitling Orbiter project; Captain of the first non-stop round-the-world balloon flight
8 FAI world records for the longest unrefuelled flight in distance and duration in the history of aviation
45,633 km in 20 days

Initiator, Chairman and Pilot of Solar Impulse; first round-the-world solar flight
22 FAI world records in solar and electric categories
43'000 km without fuel

MEDICINE

Medical doctor, specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy for adults and children

Lecturer and supervisor for the Swiss Medical Hypnosis Society

Professor at the Nice Faculty of Medicine

ENGAGEMENT

Initiator and Chairman of the Winds of Hope Foundation

Initiator and Chairman of the NoNoma Federation

United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Population Fund (UNFPA), from 2000 to 2012

United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Environmental Program (UNEP), from 2015

Initiator and Chairman of the Solar Impulse Foundation

CONFERENCES

More than 2500 public, private and institutional lectures