

Halloween was a scary night for me!

From Tasmania to Antarctica! By Patrick Gilligan

I barely slept, each time I heard a faint email notification I jumped, I was alert and on pins and needles.

Michel's RV8 was loaded with 200 gallons of fuel, in six fuel tanks (one external belly tank), scientific air analysis equipment, dry suit, inflatable raft and survival gear. Also he installed RV8 Wheel/Skis in Tasmania, extra weight and drag.

I only flew my RV8 with my wheel/skis in cold weather at half the weight of Michel's RV. At his time of departure from Hobart the temperatures were +16c deg. meaning his RV8 was required to have a slightly higher angle of attack to compensate.

The first four hours of his gruelling 16 hours non-stop flight was at 2,000 feet cruising between 100-110 knots, I sent Michel a message of encouragement, "as fuel is being consumed the airspeed will increase" also forecast winds aloft in proximity of Antarctica should be a 15 kts tailwind.

Sure enough each time I checked his Spider Tracks reports during the night his ground speed and altitude increased to 125 kts at 4,000 ft. As he approached the continent the tailwinds were as predicted and his ground speed jumped to 145+ kts at 7,500 feet. His next hurdle on the coast were the mountains requiring a climb to 11,500 feet obviously decreasing his groundspeed but the temperature is cold and air density is increasing efficiency.

Michel is flying inhospitable territory to get to the [Sea ice runway at Zucchelli Station](#) but nothing compared to his 12 hrs flying over the cold fringed ocean!

Now Michel is tired but landed for the first time his RV8 on a sea ice runway on wheel/skis in Antarctica!

Flight time was 16:18 hrs. My message on Michel's blog: Congratulations from all Canadian pilots!

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