



*Aerial view of a DG600/18m glider over Grenville, QC. The glider is flown by André Pépin and took off from Montreal Soaring Council's home airport near Hawkesbury, ON. Photo courtesy Hicham Hobeika*

## **André Pépin completes 1,050 km glider flight**

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André Pépin, a glider pilot from the Montreal Soaring Council, a gliding club based in Hawkesbury, ON, achieved on Friday April 24th a stunning 1,050 km flight.

After take-off from a small airport near State College in Pennsylvania, where several pilots of the Montreal Soaring Council are on a flying camp, André flew his glider for nearly 9 hours in the strong updrafts created by a steady wind over the ridges of the Allegheny Mountains.

Flying without engine at an average speed of 120.5 km/h he covered a non-stop distance which is the equivalent of a round-trip Montreal -Toronto. After 8 hours and 42 minutes of flight he landed at the same airport where he started from.

“It was an incredible day at the ridge,” André said. “I could not resist stopping sometimes in thermals averaging 800 to 1000 feet per minute climb rates. It was another day in paradise!”

The epic 1,050 km flight was only André’s third flight in his new glider, a LAK-17B FES 21m. It is a 21 meter wingspan high-performance single-seat glider manufactured in Lithuania and the first of this type that has been delivered in North-America. “We can say it was a real shake down for the ship!” André said about his flight.

Gliders, or sailplanes as they are sometimes called, have no engine but stay aloft using rising air currents created by various weather phenomena. Heat from the sun creates thermals, bubbles of rising warmer air. Glider pilots fly in tight circles in these thermals to climb, much like eagles and hawks do. By flying from thermal to thermal, glider pilots can sustain their flight for hours and cover hundreds of kilometers.

Soaring, as this form of motorless flight is called, is practiced in Canada by almost 1,500 pilots. The sheer beauty of soaring and the challenge of finding and using rising air currents are what get most glider pilots hooked to this unique sport.

André Pépin is an accomplished glider pilot. He started flying at age 17 and has accumulated more than 6,400 hours in 58 types of gliders. In 2014 André claimed the top spot in the Ontario & Quebec ranking of the Online Soaring Contest, a decentralized competition run via the internet with daily scoring based on GPS flight recordings and in which glider pilots from all over the world participate.

Montreal Soaring Council is one of the larger gliding clubs in Canada and flies since 1957 from its home base airfield in L’Orignal, a township near Hawkesbury, ON. The gliding club counts about 75 active members and operates almost daily from May till October.

Montreal Soaring Council is a non-profit organization and provides initial and advanced glider pilot training for its members as well as introductory flights to anyone interested to experience the thrills of motorless flight.



André Pépin in his new glider, a LAK-17B FES 21m, ready for take-off from Julian Airport, PA, on April 29th, 2015. *Photo courtesy Nicholas Moreau*

## References about soaring

[www.montrealsoaring.com](http://www.montrealsoaring.com)

Website of Montreal Soaring Council, a non-profit gliding club located in Hawkesbury, ON. Follow us on Twitter @MontrealSoaring

[www.sac.ca](http://www.sac.ca)

Soaring Association of Canada, the organization that represents all glider pilots and clubs in Canada.

[www.onlinecontest.org](http://www.onlinecontest.org)

OnLine Contest (OLC), the world-wide decentralized soaring competition where glider pilots upload and compare the GPS flight recordings of their soaring flights.

References about soaring