

PANDEMIC MAROONS ROUND THE WORLD PLANE AT ARDMORE AIRPORT



Ross Edmondson and his fiancé Elsa at Ardmore Airport

With his single-engine aircraft languishing in an Ardmore Airport hangar, Ross Edmondson's dream of circumnavigating the globe is stalled.

Ross, a 36-year-old British gas engineer, had flown more than halfway round the world (from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Auckland) when New Zealand went into lockdown over the Covid-19 pandemic late in March. Closed borders meant Ross could not continue his charity fund-raising adventure on to Hawaii and the United States mainland in his Cessna 182 aircraft, nicknamed "Planey McPlaneFace".

He had a choice: Remain stranded here with his plane or join his fiancé Elsa back in Pittsburgh. He opted for the latter.

The son of Auckland-born Anne Edmondson, nee Butler, Ross plans to return to Auckland in the next few weeks, fly to other spots around New Zealand then resume the mission he began in May last year.



Ross and Elsa at Huka Falls, Taupo

Continued on next page...

He regards the scariest time in his long journey so far was an instrument approach he made to an airport in Greenland. "It was scary. It was like Queenstown on steroids because of its mountains and remoteness," he said.

He's unlikely to forget his arrival in Laos where local officials insisted he pay \$US300 before they'd let him enter the country, even though he had all required documents. They were then unable to give him a receipt.

And his landing in heavy rain and howling wind on Lord Howe Island was unforgettable. The airport was deserted. There was no cellphone service. Ross had to text his aunt in Sydney by satellite for her to ask an island resident to guide him to civilisation.

Ross said he and several friends (as well as his father Ronald, who have acted as co-pilots at various stages of the circumnavigation) are funding the trip themselves. He's raised \$5000 to date for "African Promise", a small charity one of his school day friends had started to improve the quality of education in Kenya.

Ross removed the rear seats from his 1981-model Cessna to accommodate a 600-litre ferry fuel tank, meaning his 260hp plane can fly non-stop for 22 hours.

He's been feeling frustrated but philosophical at having to put things on hold. Ross said a photographer friend, Juvy Santos, would act as his co-pilot in the next leg of his trip through to Hawaii.

Ross said he appreciated Oceania Aviation for servicing his aircraft in his absence and NZ Warbirds at Ardmore for allowing him to leave his plane in one of their hangars.

A rundown of Ross's circumnavigation, including photographs, can be viewed online at www.katamarino.co.uk

— *By John Andrews*



The green markers show the route Ross has flown. The blue markers indicate where he plans to land on his way back to Pittsburgh