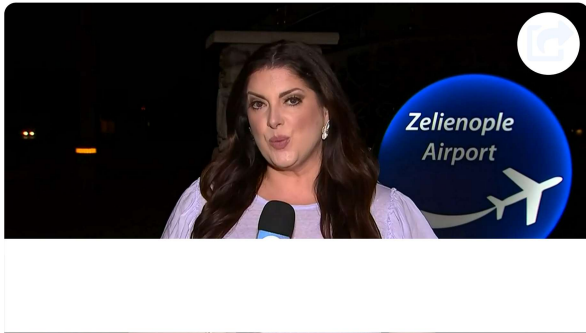




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'It's been incredibly rewarding': Pilot completes 4-year journey around the world in Zelienople



By Christine D'Antonio, WPXI-TV

June 30, 2023 at 11:26 pm EDT

year journey around the world in Zelieno ple



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D'Antonio, WPXI-
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ZELIENOPLE, Pa. — Ross Edmondson left the Zelienople Municipal Airport on May 6, 2019, on a quest to travel the world in his 1981 Cessna airplane. The trip was only supposed to take a year, but COVID thwarted that plan. Finishing on Friday was a full-circle moment for him.

“Flying into Zelienople now and seeing so many people here and even fire trucks waiting to greet me was extremely emotional,” Edmondson said.

Over 83,000 miles, 35 countries, 570 airports, and nearly 700 hours in the air have all led up to this moment for Edmondson.

“Very hard to put into words really. It’s been tiring, it’s been challenging, it’s been incredibly rewarding and exciting and I still can’t believe that I had the opportunity to do,” Edmondson said.

Before Edmondson started his journey four years ago, he'd spent over a decade planning his trip around the world. From modifying the single-engine plane to increase how far it could fly, updating instruments and even pre-planning aircraft fuel to be a certain location for his plane - it appeared Edmondson thought of everything, except for the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Edmondson added, "It was certainly not something that I had anticipated in my planning," Edmondson added. "I tried to think of every possible eventuality, and this was not something that I had come up with."

Suddenly, Edmondson found himself grounded in New Zealand in March 2020.

"The Pacific Islands all closed their borders and they stayed closed until late 2022," he said.

When he was finally able to fly again - COVID still caused some hiccups along his journey.

"Restrictions did keep changing even state by state. I got hunted down by the police in Australia and thrown into quarantine because there had been a case in a city that I had visited a few days before," Edmondson said.

Still, Edmondson persevered.

"I'd had such amazing send-off when I left here and so much support from the people here at Zelienople and a huge number of people I met on the way around who helped me that I owed it to them as much as myself to finish," he said.

And Friday, June 30 at 5 p.m., he crossed that finish line back at the same place where he left, officially making him one of only 200 small aircraft pilots to fly across the world. He also used the flight as an opportunity to support the charity African Promise which supports primary education in Kenya.

Edmondson says he plans to fly back to his home in Texas on Sunday and after that plans to take a rest and start planning his next adventure.

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