

BERTRAND PICCARD

— *change altitude* —



PORTRAIT

Explorer, Medical doctor and global influencer

Bertrand Piccard is the initiator and visionary behind Solar Impulse, the very first airplane capable of flying perpetually without fuel. It is in his DNA to go beyond the obvious and achieve the impossible. As part of a legendary dynasty of explorers and scientists who conquered the heights and depths of our planet, he made history by accomplishing two firsts in aviation, circumnavigating the globe in a solar-powered airplane and before that non stop in a balloon. The ocean depths and the stratosphere attracted his father and grandfather; the challenges of our time fascinate him. With his dual identities as medical doctor and explorer, Bertrand has become an influential voice as a forward thinking leader for progress and sustainability and a renowned inspirational speaker. Following his pioneering spirit in favor of the cause of renewable energies and clean technologies, he has now set off to select and label 1000 solutions that protect the environment in a profitable way and will then embark on a third round-the-world journey to deliver those solutions to decision-makers, encouraging them to adopt more ambitious environmental targets and energy policies.

Bertrand was one of the first to envision ecology through the lens of profitability, to show the economic opportunities in fixing climate change. Solar Impulse was built to carry this message. Taking turns at the controls of the airplane with his partner André Borschberg to achieve the first ever round-the-world solar flight, Bertrand wanted to demonstrate that energy efficiency and renewable energy can achieve incredible goals – 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 zero-emission 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.

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.

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“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.”

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.

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. Bertrand encourages others to reject common assumptions, to adopt a solution-oriented approach and to take on challenges with the spirit of a pioneer.

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 has been appointed Champion of the Earth and United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Environment. The inspiration he received from other explorers and pioneers during his life 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. Even in the midst of a new challenge, he is documenting his experience of moments to share later. He wrote several best sellers and aims to use his pen as a tool to inspire readers to greatness in their own lives. 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.”

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"Our world needs to find new ways of improving the quality of human life. Let's replace old polluting devices with modern clean technologies. Sustainable growth will only come from solutions that can save energy and protect the environment. It is possible today to bridge ecology and economy."

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 launched the second phase of his vision in the form of 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 daughters.

- > Born March 1st, 1958 in Lausanne (Switzerland).
- > Medical doctor (1986) – specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy for adults and children (1996) – specialist in hypnosis (1996)
Professor at the Nice Faculty of Medicine
- > Pioneer of hang-gliding and microlight flying in Europe;
European hang-glider aerobatics champion (1985)
- > Initiator of the Breitling Orbiter project and captain of the first round-the-world balloon flight, longest unrefueled flight ever in the history of aviation for distance and duration: 45 633 km in 20 days (7 FAI ballooning records)
- > Initiator and chairman of the Solar Impulse project and foundation; pilot of the first round-the-world solar flight, alternating with André Borschberg (12 FAI World aeroplane records in solar and electric categories)
- > President of the Winds of Hope charity Foundation which is fighting against noma
- > United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Environment,
Champion of the Earth (2012) and Energizer of the Year (2014)
- > Inspirational speaker (more than 2000 public and private lectures since 1992)
- > Official decorations: Officier of Légion d'Honneur, Ordre des Aînés and Ordre de Leopold; Commandeur of Ordre d'Adolphe de Nassau; Chevalier of Ordre de Saint-Charles; Médaille de l'Aéronautique; Gold Medal de Jeunesse et Sport; Olympic Order
- > Honorary Doctor of Science, Technology and Letters; Honorary President of the Explorers' Club; multiple awards from aviation, geography, exploration and academic associations such as National Geographic Society, Federation Aéronautique Internationale (FAI), Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, etc.
- > Author of: "A Trace in the Sky" (Editions Favre, 2005); "Around the World in 20 Days" (Wiley, New York, 1999, a best seller); "Changer d'Altitude" (Editions Stock, 2014, a best-seller); "Objectif Soleil" (Editions Stock, 2016)

