



This patch was the initiative to present the story of **Daedalus project**. A forgotten story that all aviation fans should know about. The

[MIT](#)

Aeronautics and Astronautics Department's Daedalus was a *human-powered aircraft*

that, on 23 April 1988, flew a distance of 71.5 mi (115.11 km) in 3 hours, 54 minutes, from Iraklion on the island of Crete to the island of Santorini.

The flight holds official FAI world records for distance and duration for human-powered aircraft. The craft was named after the mythological inventor of aviation, Daedalus, and was inspired by the Greek myth of Daedalus' escape from Crete using manmade wings.

There were actually three aircraft constructed:

- **Light Eagle** (originally Michelob Light Eagle): a 42 kg (92 lb) prototype.
- **Daedalus 87**: Crashed during testing at Rogers Dry Lake (NASA Dryden Flight Research Center) on 17 February 1988, and was rebuilt as a backup.
- **Daedalus 88**: Flew from Crete to just off the beach on Santorini. Both Daedalus 87 and Daedalus 88 weighed 31 kg (69 lb). All three aircraft were constructed at the MIT Lincoln Lab Flight Facility at Hanscom Field outside Boston, Massachusetts, by a team of undergraduate students, faculty, and recent graduates of MIT.



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Daedalus 88

The record-setting flight of Daedalus 88 had as pilot Olympic cyclist [Kanellos Kanellopoulos](#) of Greece. The flight began at the main airport of Iraklion, on Crete, with a horizontal launch under the pilot's own power, as governed by FAI rules. During the flight, the Daedalus flew primarily between 15 and 30 feet in altitude, and was accompanied by several escort vessels. The speed of the flight was helped by a tailwind, but this also made a head-on landing approach to the narrow beach hazardous, especially with crowds of spectators on the sand. The pilot maneuvered the aircraft to land more into the wind and parallel with the length of the beach. As the right wing extended over the black sand beach, the heat rising from the beach lifted that wing, turning the aircraft back towards the sea. This effect prevented the pilot from getting the whole aircraft onto the beach. The flight ended in the water (7 meters from Perissa Beach on Santorini, according to the official record), when increasing gusty winds caused a torsional failure of the tail boom. Lacking control, the airplane then pitched nose-up, and another gust caused a failure of the main wing spar. The pilot swam to shore. Much of the wreckage of Daedalus 88 is in storage at the Smithsonian's restoration facility.

We would like to sincerely thank our friend **Anastasios Barbisis** for reminding us this beautiful story and for providing us scan of the Daedalus patch.