Southernsun Searey makes 22-hour Pacific flight

How many hours could you fly for? Four, six, ten? How about 21.8 hours in one day including one non-stop leg of just over 16 hours? Forget the obvious question (there are products to cope with that in-flight), how on earth do you stay awake for so long?

That flight has just been achieved by Australian pilot Mike Smith, flying a two-seat Searey amphibious aircraft. "The plan is to loosely follow the Qantas Empire Flying Boat route of 1938 from Sydney to London, in the Searey amphibian aeroplane 'Southern Sun', said Mike on his blog (link below).

Mike set off from Melbourne, Australia in April this year and reached the UK in June. His first UK destination was Southampton, the end of the Qantas Flying Boat route, and included a 'touch and go' on Southampton Water with the consent of the harbourmaster and Southampton ATC.

From the UK, he crossed the Atlantic to the USA for a lengthy tour, and then on to Alaska. Along the way he was trying to get permission to enter Russia, mainly for a fuel stop, but the Russians kept saying avgas wasn't available. So, having reached Alaska, Mike decided the only solution was to bypass Russia!

He followed the Alaskan coastline down to Cold Bay, then crossed the North Pacific Ocean to the Aleutian Islands, landing at the capital Adak. Mike flew 30 gallons of fuel out to the deserted island of Attu, where there had once been a US base, and then worked out the best weather window to get a tailwind.

On 28 October, Mike set off, landing at Attu to take on the fuel, then headed for Kushiro, Japan. It was fogged in when he arrived so landed at Nakashibetsu Airport instead, slept for a few hours then took off again for Kushiro, by now sunny.
 "Well, what do I have to say about all that?" said Mike in his blog. "Glad it's over? Yes.
"Did I really think about all that was going to happen? Yes, I really did. Over and over. A lot. I was physically and mentally prepared for it.
 "Would I do it again? No. I would make sure next time I didn't have a need for it."