Russian adventurer Fedor Konyukhov yesterday broke the record for the fastest round-the-world flight in a hot air balloon.

Konyukhov, who is in his 60s, from Australia to above New Zealand, across the Pacific Ocean, South America, the Cape of Good Hope and the Southern Ocean. During the journey of some 34,823 kilometers, he has been confined to a lightweight gondola which is hung from the hot air balloon, his crew said.

Konyukhov's son Oscar, among those cheering his father's achievement, said the chances of completing a round-the-world solo flight on the first attempt were "less than the record set by the late American adventurer Steve Fossett who in 2002 became the first person to fly solo around the world in a balloon in a feat which took 13 days.

"All we had to do was to get within 15 degrees Celsius of the South Pole, which we took off from!" The flight route has taken Konyukhov through some of the most inhospitable regions of the planet, conditions inside the car could be nasty, with Konyukhov using an oxygen mask at higher altitudes. He was also dealing with extremely cold temperatures—which at times reached minus 35 degrees Celsius and saw a layer of ice several centimeters thick form on the gondola.

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