

Solar-powered boat completes 13,000 km journey

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GENEVA, Feb 3, 2007 (AFP) -

An innovative Swiss catamaran has arrived in New York after a 13,000 kilometre (8,000 miles) journey that included the first ever Atlantic crossing by a solar-powered boat, the owners said Wednesday.

Sun21 and its five crew docked in New York late Tuesday, five months after leaving the souther Spanish port of Chipiona near Cadiz to demonstrate the value of solar power for maritime use, the Transatlantic 21 partnership said on its website.

"**Sun21** serves as the shining example of clean energy applications in practice," said skipper Michel Thonney.

"It has been my distinct pleasure to be a part of the crew and to prove we don't need oil to cross oceans," he added.

The 60 square metres (646 square feet) of solar panels that topped the experimental vessel allowed it to cover up to 200 kilometres (125 miles) a day, at speeds equivalent to those achieved by everyday sailing yachts.

The partnership said that out of all means of transport solar power was best suited to shipping and boats, and raised the prospect of fleets of cargo ships using renewable energy.

The 14 metre (16 foot) vessel's voyage included crossing the Atlantic Ocean from the Canary Islands to Martinique, a leg which was completed on February 2.

The vessel symbolically followed the historic 5,000 kilometre route sailed by explorer Christopher Columbus during the first known transatlantic voyage in the 15th century.

It then headed north to New York via stopovers in several Caribbean islands and Miami, arriving on schedule in Manhattan.

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