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Solar boat completes fuel-free Atlantic voyage, arrives in NY

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NEW YORK (AP) -- A solar-powered boat arrived in a harbor on Tuesday after a voyage of more than 7,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Swiss-built catamaran, sun21, sailed with a crew of five, including ship builder Mark Wurst, in the first crossing of the Atlantic by a solar-powered boat, said organizers of the trip.

The twin-hulled boat left Europe on Dec. 3 from Chipionoa, Spain, and traveled to the Caribbean island Martinique in February. The final stop was North Cove Marina, where the boat was dwarfed by massive cargo barges and ships.

At times the voyage was challenging, especially when there was no sun to power the boat, but crew members said it was a great experience.

"In our modern society, we can travel the world in a way that is both efficient and respectful to our environment and our resources," said the boat's skipper, Michael Thonney. "This has been a liberating journey."

The 46-foot boat produced 2,000 kilowatt hours of solar energy during the trip thanks to a roof of photovoltaic panels mounted above the two hulls, according to the transatlantic21 Association, which was formed to fund and promote the trip.

The solar energy was used to power the boat's electric motors, and any surplus was stored in batteries, allowing it to travel at about 6 mph.

The sun21 was tested in the Rhine River in Switzerland last October before setting out.

transatlantic21: <http://www.transatlantic21.org/>