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## Swiss boat claims first solar Atlantic crossing



Sun21 reaches port at Le Marin on the island of Martinique (Keystone)

**A Swiss-made catamaran has become the first solar-powered boat to cross the Atlantic after reaching the French Caribbean island of Martinique.**

The boat's owners said at the weekend that Sun21 had docked in Martinique, 63 days after leaving the Spanish port of Chipiona near Cadiz.

It is claimed to be the first-ever motorized vessel to complete the journey without using any fuel.

The 14-metre boat largely followed the historic route sailed by explorer Christopher Columbus on the first known maritime crossing of the Atlantic in the 15th century, making its last stopover in the Canary Islands.

The specially designed catamaran covered the final 5,000 kilometre

non-stop leg in just 30 days.

"The achievement serves as a powerful example of responsible energy in practice," said Transatlantic21 partnership, the private organisation which is funding the trip, in a statement released on Saturday.

"It also is impressive evidence of the suitability of solar technology for high-sea voyages."

The arrival in Martinique on Friday came on the same day that a hard-hitting report was released by United Nations panel of scientists about the impact of climate change.

This warned that global warming was so severe that it would continue for centuries and that humans were to blame.

### Solar power age

Crew member Martin Vosseler said the boat was therefore aimed at sending a clear signal about the arrival of the age of solar power.

The eight person crew said the 60 square metres of solar panels fuelling Sun21 allowed them to travel up to 198km a day.

"There's hardly any vibration, the solar panels provide us with shade and, unlike a sailing boat, we make good headway even when there's no wind," crewmember Beat von Scarpatetti said on his blog.

The catamaran was sent on its way in Basel by current Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey last year, before leaving Chipiona on December 3 last year.

Sun21 has now covered about half of its journey. It will next head to New York via several Caribbean islands and Miami, aiming to dock in Manhattan in May.

The team has chosen New York as its final destination because it is where the UN has its headquarters.

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### CONTEXT

Swiss are also involved in several other solar-based projects.

One project aims to make a round-the-world trip in a boat fuelled by both solar power and hydrogen.

Renowned balloon pilot and psychiatrist Bertrand Piccard is planning to fly around the world in a solar-powered aircraft.

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- [Transatlantic21 \(http://www.transatlantic21.org/\)](http://www.transatlantic21.org/)
- [Sun21 \(http://www.sun21.ch/index.php?id=20\)](http://www.sun21.ch/index.php?id=20)

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