

Solar boat reaches Paris after crossing Atlantic (Update)

September 10 2013, by Greg Keller



The Turanor PlanetSolar, the world's largest solar boat, travels on the Seine river in Sevres, outside Paris, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013. The PlanetSolar with its 537 square meters of photovoltaic panels powering 6 blocks of lithium-ion batteries, accomplished the first around the world trip powered only by solar energy in May 2012. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

The world's largest solar-powered boat has docked on the banks of the Seine River, its final port of call after a three-month voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to study how the Gulf Stream and climate change could

influence each other.

The 102-foot-long (31-meter-long) Turanor PlanetSolar catamaran looks like one of Darth Vader's TIE Fighters turned on its side.

Starting from Miami in June, University of Geneva scientists sailed up the eastern seaboard of the United States, then across the Atlantic, taking water and air measurements that should allow them to better understand the complex interaction between the ocean and the atmosphere.

The scientists focused on aerosols, fine particles emitted at the ocean's surface that can influence climate, said Martin Beniston the expedition's chief climatologist and head of the University of Geneva's Institute for Environmental Sciences.

"Our first surprise when we started looking at the data is the quantity of the aerosols that are actually injected into the atmosphere by the ocean, which means we might have underestimated the climatic role of the oceans via aerosols," Beniston said.

The \$20 million PlanetSolar's deck is covered with photovoltaic panels that charge a gigantic lithium ion battery. The vessel can last on battery power for up to four days if there's no sun.



The Turanor PlanetSolar, the world's largest solar boat, travels on the Seine river as the Eiffel Tower is seen in background, in Paris, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013. The PlanetSolar with its 537 square meters of photovoltaic panel powering 6 blocks of lithium-ion batteries, accomplished the first around the world trip powered only by solar energy in May 2012. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

PlanetSolar garnered attention last year when it completed a nearly two-year circumnavigation of the globe, the first round-the-world voyage by a solar-powered boat.

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Citation: Solar boat reaches Paris after crossing Atlantic (Update) (2013, September 10)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-solar-boat-paris-atlantic.html>

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