

US icebreaker back after pioneering North Pole trip

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A U.S. polar icebreaker has returned to Seattle after cutting its way to the North Pole in support of a mission to study the health of the Arctic Ocean.

The Coast Guard Cutter Healy pulled into its Seattle homeport Thursday, about two months after it became the first U.S surface vessel to make the trip unaccompanied.

Crews and scientists left Dutch Harbor, Alaska, on Aug. 9, and spent 65 days at sea. The 420-foot (128-meter) long icebreaker traveled more than 5,000 nautical miles and scientists aboard collected thousands of ice, water, sediment and air samples along the way.

The Healy is the country's newest high-latitude vessel and is capable of breaking more than 10 feet (3 meters) of ice.

It sailed to the North Pole in support of Geotraces, an international effort to study the world's oceans.

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