Switzerland's PlanetSolar Boat Sets World Speed Record

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These days, it's possible to slap a solar panel on just about anything. We've seen solar-powered RVs, toys, and wilderness workstations. We've even seen solar-powered boats, but most of them just used the sun to offset electricity, not to power the motor. Not so with the miraculous PlanetSolar vessel.

Yesterday, it was announced that Switzerland's MS Tûranor PlanetSolar, the world's largest solar boat, set a new speed record for a transatlantic crossing by a solar electric vessel. The boat sailed 2,867 miles, from Spain to St. Martin in less than a month, and at an average speed of 5.3 knots.

Image via PlanetSolar

Now, a 22 day journey at less than 7 miles per hour might not seem that impressive…until you consider that the successful journey didn't consume a single drop of fossil fuel or emit a single puff of carbon emissions. The catamaran completed this year's passage across the Atlantic in 22 of days, 4 days faster than the same journey made last year. The length of journey is currently being authorized by Guinness World Records.

Image via PlanetSolar

The Swiss solar-powered boat's energy consumption had to be carefully managed in order to maintain an efficient speed and reach St. Martin in less than 26 days, according to a press release. "During the transatlantic crossing, the crew encountered phases of substantial cloudiness for several consecutive days and had to adjust the route. The adjustments increased the travelling distance by 7%, but enabled the PlanetSolar crew to avoid winds and unfavorable swells."

After having demonstrated the potential of solar energy by accomplishing the first circumnavigation of the globe using only solar power, PlanetSolar is now touring the world to illustrate the practical applications of such a vessel. In June, the vessel will arrive in the United States, with stops in Miami, New York and Boston. When in port, the ship transforms into an educational platform to share the excitement and the potential of solar power.