



Panama Canal Welcomes Largest Vessel by Cargo Capacity, Marking Expansion's Continued Impact Six Years Later

The waterway celebrates roundtrip voyage of containership Zephyr, the largest vessel by cargo capacity to ever transit, days after the Expansion's sixth anniversary

Last month, the Panama Canal celebrated the transit of CMA CGM's Zephyr, the containership with the largest cargo capacity to ever transit the waterway. On July 1, the vessel completed its return trip through the Expanded Canal's Neopanamax Locks, which opened [six years ago](#) to accommodate the world's growing fleet of large containerships.

The Neopanamax containership Zephyr has a total capacity of 16,285 TEUs. After calling at the U.S. ports of New York and Savannah, the Zephyr sailed back southbound through the Canal, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, in route to Qingdao, China.

While the Neopanamax Locks were initially expected to serve vessels with a maximum of 12,600 TEUs, the Panama Canal team quickly surpassed this threshold, thanks in part to the experience gained operating the locks and its close collaboration with customers. Since

its inauguration on June 26, 2016, the Expanded Canal has exponentially increased connectivity and reshaped trade, with 180 maritime routes now converging through the waterway, linking 1,920 ports across 170 countries. Today, containerships are the leading users of the third set of locks, contributing 45 percent of all transits.

“There’s no better way to mark the anniversary of the Expanded Canal than with this month’s Zephyr transit, which exemplifies the continued growth potential that it offers for our clients,” said Panama Canal Administrator Ricaurte Vásquez Morales.

The implementation of various water conservations efforts, coupled with increased rainfall in the Canal watershed, has allowed the Panama Canal to offer a 15.24 meters draft (50 feet) since May, the highest permitted for vessels transiting the Neopanamax Locks. The lowest draft level reached this past dry season was 15.09 meters (49.5 feet) in March 2022.

“At the Canal, we are always seeking innovative ways to collaborate with shipping lines to better serve their needs,” said the Panama Canal Deputy Administrator Ilya Espino de Marotta. “This milestone demonstrates the potential that our customers can unlock, thanks in part to our team’s flexibility and willingness to meet new challenges.”

While the Zephyr is now the largest by cargo capacity to transit the waterway, the record for the largest vessel by dimension is for the containership Evergreen’s Triton, which measures 51.2 meters in beam and 369 meters in length.

The Panama Canal Expansion remains the [largest enhancement project](#) in the waterway’s history, opening a third traffic lane, doubling cargo capacity, and enabling the Canal to accommodate more than 96 percent of the world’s containerships.

About the Panama Canal Authority (ACP)

The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) is an autonomous legal entity of the Republic of Panama in charge of the operation, administration, management, preservation, maintenance, and modernization of the Panama Canal, as well as its activities and related services, so that the Canal may operate in a safe, continuous, efficient manner. For more information, please refer to the ACP’s website: <http://www.pancanal.com> or follow us on Twitter [@thepanamacanal](#).

