

ESA astronaut Roberto Vittori arrives at the International Space Station

April 17 2005

The Soyuz TMA-6 spacecraft carrying European Space Agency astronaut Roberto Vittori on the ENEIDE mission and the two members of the ISS Expedition 11 crew docked with the International Space Station (ISS) today at the Russian docking compartment Pirs at [04:20] Central European summer time (CEST). Following the scheduled post-docking checks, the hatch between the spacecraft and the ISS was opened at [07:12] CEST.

Vittori is the first European astronaut to fly to the ISS for a second time, having made his first flight on the Marco Polo mission in 2002. During his 8-day stay on the ISS, he will carry out an extensive experiment programme in the fields of human physiology, biology, technology and education. One of his first tasks will be to transfer experiment equipment and samples from Soyuz TMA-6 to the ISS. Other experiment equipment for the mission was transported to the ISS on the unmanned Progress M-52 supply ship, launched on 28 February.

The ENEIDE mission is being co-sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Defence and the region of Lazio in the framework of an agreement between ESA and the Russian federal space agency, Roscosmos. Many of the experiments were developed by Italian researchers and built by Italian industry and research institutions. In addition to the experimental programme of the ENEIDE mission, time has been set aside for Vittori to take part in communication activities and emergency ISS training on his first day on the station.

His programme of scientific experiments, technology demonstrations and educational activities will continue throughout the mission, which concludes when he returns with the ISS Expedition 10 crew, Leroy Chiao and Salizhan Sharipov, with a scheduled landing in Kazakhstan at midnight (Central European Time) on 24/25 April. They will return in Soyuz TMA-5, which has been stationed at the ISS with the Expedition 10 crew for the past six months, serving as an emergency lifeboat. Vittori will play an important role in the reentry, descent and landing on the return flight in Soyuz TMA-5, which flew the Expedition 10 crew to the ISS last October. Soyuz TMA-6 will remain docked with the ISS for the next six months, becoming the lifeboat for the ISS Expedition 11 crew.

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