

Swedish ESA astronaut is ready to fly

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European Space Agency astronaut Christer Fuglesang is about to become the first Swedish and the first Nordic astronaut in space.

Fuglesang will be a mission specialist aboard NASA's space shuttle Discovery when it lifts off on its 12-day mission to the International Space Station -- a launch scheduled for next Thursday.

Once onboard the space station, Fuglesang will meet with fellow ESA astronaut Thomas Reiter of Germany, who has been a permanent crew member since July 6. That meeting will mark the first time two ESA astronauts will fly together on the same ISS mission. Both will return to Earth aboard Discovery at the end of its 12-day assignment.

The Paris-based ESA said Fuglesang, while at the space station, will perform two spacewalks and conduct several European experiments in the areas of human physiology and radiation dosimetry, as well as a series of experiments geared to educational purposes.

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