

Endeavour Crew Returns Home After Successful Mission

March 27 2008



The STS-123 crew members pose for a final photo under shuttle Endeavour after landing at Kennedy. From left are Mission Specialists Takao Doi of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, Robert L. Behnken, and Rick Linnehan; Pilot Gregory H. Johnson; Commander Dominic Gorie; and Mission Specialist Mike Foreman. Photo credit: NASA/Kim Shiflett

After 16 days in space and 250 orbits of the Earth, space shuttle Endeavour touched down at 8:39 p.m. EDT Wednesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, bringing the STS-123 mission to a flawless end.

Space shuttle Endeavour and its crew landed at 8:39 p.m. EDT Wednesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Fla., after completing a 16-day journey of nearly 6.6 million miles in space. The first landing attempt at Kennedy was bypassed due to low clouds in the area.

Endeavour's flight was the longest shuttle mission to the International Space Station and included a record five spacewalks. The shuttle's seven astronauts worked with the three-member station crew and ground teams around the world to install the first section of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Kibo laboratory and the Canadian Space Agency's two-armed robotic system, known as Dextre.

"The success of this mission makes the International Space Station truly international," said NASA Associate Administrator for Space Operations Bill Gerstenmaier. "Japan is now a full-time participant, controlling the Kibo module from its center near Tokyo. We have teams working around the clock in the United States, Russia, Germany and Japan overseeing the crew's work and various elements of station. With the ATV scheduled to dock next week, Dextre ready to go, our partners' modules operating, and the next Soyuz preparing to launch, it's an exciting time to be in the space business."

Dominic Gorie commanded the STS-123 flight and was joined by Pilot Gregory H. Johnson, Mission Specialists Robert L. Behnken, Mike Foreman, Rick Linnehan, Garrett Reisman and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Takao Doi. Reisman remained aboard the space station, replacing Expedition 16 Flight Engineer Leopold Eyharts, who returned to Earth on Endeavour after living on the outpost since early February. Reisman will return on shuttle Discovery's STS-124 mission, targeted to launch May 25.

With Endeavour and its crew safely home, the stage is set for the next phase of station assembly. The STS-124 mission is the second of three flights that will launch components to complete the Japanese Kibo laboratory. Shuttle Discovery will deliver Kibo's large pressurized module and robotics system to the station.

The European Space Agency's Automated Transfer Vehicle, or ATV, is

scheduled to dock with the space station on April 3. Russia's Soyuz TMA-12 will launch the Expedition 17 crew to the station on April 8.

Source: NASA

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