

Shuttle Endeavour lands safe in Fla.

July 31 2009



After a 16-day mission to the International Space Station, space shuttle Endeavour touches down at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Photo credit: NASA/Kim Shiflett

Space shuttle Endeavour and its seven astronauts returned to Earth on Friday, completing a long but successful construction job that boosted the size and power of the international space station.

Space shuttle Endeavour and its crew of seven astronauts ended a 16-day journey of more than 6.5 million miles with a 10:48 a.m. EDT landing Friday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. During the flight, Endeavour delivered the final piece of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Kibo laboratory and a new crew member to the International Space Station.

Endeavour's mission included five spacewalks and installation of two

platforms outside the Japanese module. One platform remained on the station and serves as a type of porch for experiments that require direct exposure to space. The other was an experiment storage pallet that returned aboard the shuttle. During the mission, Kibo's robotic arm transferred three experiments from the palette to the platform. The station now is 83 percent complete and has a mass of more than 685,000 pounds.

Mark Polansky commanded the flight and was joined by Pilot Doug Hurley and Mission Specialists Christopher Cassidy, Tom Marshburn, Dave Wolf, Canadian Space Agency astronaut Julie Payette and Tim Kopra. Kopra remained aboard the station, replacing Flight Engineer and Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, who returned to Earth on Endeavour after more than four months on the station.

When Endeavour's seven astronauts joined the six resident Expedition 20 crew members aboard the space station, a record number of 13 people were aboard the orbiting laboratory. All five partner agencies were represented.

A welcome ceremony for the crew's return to Houston will be held at Ellington Field's NASA Hangar 990 at 5 p.m. EDT on Saturday, Aug. 1. The public is invited to attend. The crew's return will be broadcast on NASA Television's video file Monday.

With Endeavor and its crew safely home, the stage is set for the launch of STS-128, which is targeted for Aug. 25. Discovery's 13-day flight will deliver a new crew member and 33,000 pounds of equipment to the station. The equipment includes science and storage racks, a freezer to store research samples, a new sleeping compartment and the COLBERT treadmill.

Provided by NASA

Citation: Shuttle Endeavour lands safe in Fla. (2009, July 31) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-07-shuttle-endeavour-safe-fla.html>

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