

Space shuttle Atlantis, 7 astronauts back on Earth

November 27 2009



Birds scatter as the space shuttle Atlantis touches down on Kennedy Space Center's Runway 33 Friday, Nov. 27, 2009, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The shuttle completed an 11-day mission to the international space station. (AP Photo/Bruce Weaver, Pool)

Space shuttle Atlantis and its crew of seven astronauts ended an 11-day journey of nearly 4.5 million miles with a 9:44 a.m. EST landing Friday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The mission, designated STS-129, included three spacewalks and the installation of two platforms to the International Space Station's truss, or backbone. The platforms hold large spare parts to sustain station operations after the shuttles are retired. The shuttle crew delivered about 30,000 pounds of replacement parts for systems that provide power to the station, keep it from overheating, and maintain a proper orientation in space.

STS-129 Commander Charlie Hobaugh was joined on Atlantis' STS-129 mission by Pilot Barry Wilmore and Mission Specialists Leland Melvin, Randy Bresnik, Mike Foreman and Bobby Satcher. Atlantis returned with station resident Nicole Stott, who spent 91 days in space. This marks the final time the shuttle is expected to rotate station crew members.

A welcome ceremony for the astronauts will be held Monday, Nov. 30, in Houston.

With Atlantis and its crew safely home, the stage is set for launch of shuttle Endeavour on its STS-130 mission, targeted to begin in February. Endeavour will deliver a pressurized module, known as Tranquility, which will provide room for many of the space station's life support systems. Attached to the node is a cupola, a robotic control station with six windows around its sides and another in the center that provides a 360-degree view around the station.

Provided by NASA

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