

Space shuttle Atlantis lifts off on supply mission

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Space shuttle Atlantis lifts off from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Monday, Nov. 16, 2009. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

(PhysOrg.com) -- Space shuttle Atlantis and its six-member crew began an 11-day delivery flight to the International Space Station on Monday with a 2:28 p.m. EST launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The shuttle will transport spare hardware to the outpost and return a station crew member who spent more than two months in space.

Atlantis is carrying 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. The large equipment can best be

transported using the shuttle's unique capabilities.

"We appreciate all the effort making this launch attempt possible. We are excited to take this incredible vehicle for a ride to another incredible vehicle, the ISS," Commander Charlie Hobaugh said shortly before launch.

The flight will include three spacewalks and the installation of two platforms to the station's truss, or backbone. The platforms will store the spare parts needed to sustain station operations after shuttle fleet is retired.

Hobaugh is joined on Atlantis' STS-129 mission by Pilot Barry E. Wilmore and Mission Specialists Leland Melvin, Randy Bresnik, Mike Foreman and Bobby Satcher. Atlantis will return with station resident Nicole Stott, marking the final time the shuttle is expected to rotate station crew members. Wilmore, Bresnik and Satcher are first-time space fliers.

Atlantis' first landing opportunity at Kennedy is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 27 at 9:43 a.m. This mission is the 129th space shuttle flight, the 31st to the station, the 31st for Atlantis and the fifth in 2009.

Provided by NASA

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