

SpaceX cargo ship leaves orbit on way back to Earth

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The unmanned Dragon cargo vessel operated by US company SpaceX on Thursday completed its deorbit burn, one of the final steps in its return to Earth for an ocean landing, NASA said.

"The [SpaceX](#) team has confirmed that the burn has been completed," a NASA television commentator said.

Next, a series of parachutes are to be deployed as the capsule aims for a landing in the Pacific Ocean, 490 nautical miles (907 kilometers) southwest of the coast of California, where recovery boats are waiting.

The splashdown is scheduled for 11:44 am Eastern time (1544 GMT).

The Dragon spaceship launched on May 22 and spent about a week at the [International Space Station](#), carrying about a half ton of cargo and returning even more to Earth, marking the first such mission by a commercial enterprise.

The successful launch and berthing at the ISS was hailed as marking a new era for private spaceflight, in which business ventures will someday replace the capacity once held by NASA to carry humans and cargo to the space lab.

The end of the three-decade [shuttle program](#) in 2011 left Russia as the sole nation capable of ferrying both astronauts and gear to the orbiting outpost.

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