

US space shuttle Endeavour heads to museum

September 19 2012, by Marcia Dunn



This framegrab image provided by NASA TV shows space shuttle Endeavour atop NASA's Shuttle Carrier Aircraft, or SCA, doing a low level flyby at the Shuttle Landing Facility in the early morning hours at NASA's Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday, Sept. 19, 2012 in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The SCA, a modified 747 jetliner, will fly Endeavour to Los Angeles where it will be placed on public display at the California Science Center. This is the final ferry flight scheduled in the Space Shuttle Program era. (AP Photo/NASA-TV)

(AP)—The U.S. space shuttle Endeavour began a journey to its new life as a museum piece Wednesday, heading west on the last ferry flight of its kind as NASA shuts down its shuttle program.

Bolted to the top of a jumbo jet, the space agency's youngest shuttle departed Kennedy Space Center in Florida at sunrise on the first leg of its flight to California.

Crowds lined the beaches of Cape Canaveral as the shuttle swooped low overhead in one final show.

"I am feeling a tremendous amount of pride," said astronaut Kay Hire, who flew aboard Endeavour two years ago. Endeavour flew 25 times in space before retiring last year. It circled Earth more nearly 4,700 times.

NASA retired its shuttle fleet last summer, under the direction of the White House, to spend more time and money on reaching destinations beyond low-Earth orbit. Asteroids and the planet Mars are on the space agency's radar for crewed missions.



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Endeavour to Los Angeles where it will be placed on public display at the California Science Center. This is the final ferry flight scheduled in the Space Shuttle Program era. (AP Photo/NASA-TV)

Endeavour made it as far as Houston, home to Mission Control, on Wednesday and will arrive in Los Angeles on Friday. In mid-October, it will be transported very slowly down city streets to the California Science Center.

This is the last flight for a space shuttle. Atlantis will remain at Kennedy for display. Discovery is at the Smithsonian Institution.

Hundreds of people cheered the shuttle's arrival in Houston.

"I want to go on it," said 3-year-old Joshua Lee as he headed to the landing area with his mother and grandmother.

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