

Endeavour finally reaches permanent LA museum home (Update)

October 14 2012, by Alicia Chang



The space shuttle Endeavour slowly moves down Martin Luther King Blvd. in Los Angeles, Sunday, Oct.14, 2012. In thousands of Earth orbits, the space shuttle Endeavour traveled 123 million miles (198 million kilometers). But the last few miles (kilometers) of its final journey are proving hard to get through. Endeavour's 12-mile (19-kilometer) crawl across Los Angeles to the California Science Museum hit repeated delays Saturday, leaving expectant crowds along city streets and at the destination slowly dwindling. Officials estimated the shuttle, originally expected to finish the trip early Saturday evening, would not arrive until mid-morning Sunday. (AP Photo/Alex Gallardo)

(AP)—It was supposed to be a slow but smooth journey to retirement, a parade through city streets for a shuttle that logged millions of miles (kilometers) in space.

But Endeavour's final mission turned out to be a logistical headache that delayed its arrival to its museum resting place by about 17 hours.

After a 12-mile (19-kilometer) weave past trees and utility poles that included thousands of adoring onlookers, flashing cameras and even the filming of a TV commercial, Endeavour arrived at the California Science Center Sunday to a greeting party of city leaders and other dignitaries that had expected it many hours earlier.

Endeavour was still inching toward a hangar on the grounds of the museum mid-Sunday afternoon.

"It's like Christmas!" said Mark Behn, 55, a member of the museum ground support team who watched the shuttle's snail-like approach from inside the hangar. "We've waited so long and been told so many things about when it would get here. But here it is, and it's a dream come true."

Movers had planned a slow trip, saying the shuttle that once orbited at more than 17,000 mph (27,000 kph) would move at just 2 mph (3.2 kph) in its final voyage through Inglewood and southern Los Angeles.

But that estimate turned out to be generous, with Endeavour often creeping along at a barely detectable pace when it wasn't at a dead stop due to difficult-to-manuever obstacles like tree branches and light posts.

Another delay came in the early morning hours Sunday when the shuttle's remote-controlled, 160-wheel carrier began leaking oil.



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Despite the holdups, the team charged with transporting the shuttle felt a "great sense of accomplishment" when it made it onto the museum grounds, said Jim Hennessy, a spokesman for Sarens, the contract mover.

"It's historic and will be a great memory," he said. "Not too many people will be able to match that—to say, 'We moved the space shuttle through the streets of Inglewood and Los Angeles.'"

Transporting Endeavour cross-town was a costly feat with an estimated price tag of \$10 million, to be paid for by the science center and private donations.

Late Friday, crews spent hours transferring the shuttle to a special, lighter towing dolly for its trip over Interstate 405. The dolly was pulled across the Manchester Boulevard bridge by a Toyota Tundra pickup, and the car company filmed the event for a commercial after paying for a permit, turning the entire scene into a movie set complete with special lighting, sound and staging.



Spectators photograph the space shuttle Endeavour as it slowly moves down Martin Luther King Blvd. in Los Angeles Sunday, Oct. 14, 2012. In thousands of Earth orbits, the space shuttle Endeavour traveled 123 million miles. But the last few miles of its final journey are proving hard to get through. Endeavour's 12-mile crawl across Los Angeles to the California Science Museum hit repeated delays Saturday, leaving expectant crowds along city streets and at the destination slowly dwindling. Officials estimated the shuttle, originally expected

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Saturday started off promising, with Endeavour 90 minutes ahead of schedule. But accumulated hurdles and hiccups caused it to run hours behind at day's end.

Some 400 trees had been removed along the route, but officials said most of the trees that gave them trouble could not be cut down because they were old or treasured for other reasons, including some planted in honor of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

The crowd had its problems too. Despite temperatures in the mid-70s Fahrenheit (mid-20s Celsius), several dozen people were treated for heat-related injuries after a long day in the sun, according to fire officials.

But it was a happy, peaceful crowd, with firefighters having only to respond to a sheared hydrant and a small rubbish fire, and no reports of any arrests.

And despite the late problems the mood for most of the day was festive.

At every turn of Endeavour's slow-speed commute through urban streets, spectators jammed intersections as the shuttle shuffled past stores, schools, churches and front yards through the working-class neighborhoods of southern Los Angeles. Sidewalks were off-limits due to Endeavour's enormous wingspan.



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Endeavour's arrival in Los Angeles was a homecoming. It may have zipped around the Earth nearly 4,700 times, but its roots are solidly grounded in California. Its main engines were fashioned in the San Fernando Valley. The heat tiles were invented in Silicon Valley. Its "fly-by-wire" technology was developed in the Los Angeles suburb of Downey. In 1991, it rolled off the assembly line in the Mojave Desert to replace Challenger, which blew up during liftoff in 1986, killing seven astronauts.

As Endeavour shuffled by crowds, its age was evident after 123 million

miles (198 million kilometers) in space and two dozen re-entries.

Stephanie Gibbs, a longtime Inglewood resident, passed the Forum, where the Los Angeles Lakers used to play and where Endeavour made a pit stop Saturday, many times in her life. But she wasn't prepared for what she saw.

"There was a space shuttle blocking the street and I said, 'Whoa,'" she said.

Gibbs, who lives off Crenshaw Drive, the narrowest section of the move, would like to see a sign designating it as a shuttle crossing.

"We've been on the map" because of the Lakers, she said. "This kind of highlights it more."

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