

How to see the International Space Station

May 24 2013, by Fraser Cain



Sunita Williams appears to touch the sun during this spacewalk on Expedition 35 on the completed International Space Station. Credit: NASA

The International Space Station is one of the most complicated machines ever built and the largest object ever assembled in space.

At any time there are up to six [astronauts](#) on board, each originating from one of fifteen different nations on Earth. It orbits at an [altitude](#) of approximately four-hundred kilometers, and completes an [orbit](#) around the Earth every ninety-two minutes and fifty seconds. The station has a

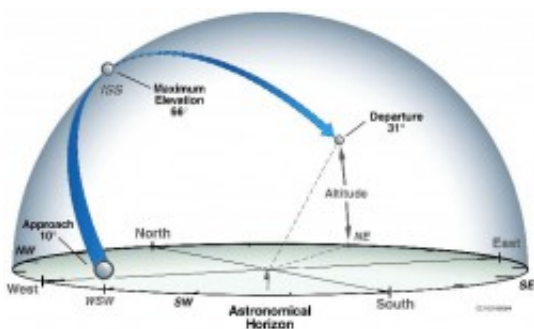
mass of four-hundred-and-twenty metric tonnes, and contains a dozen pressurized modules, and many more unpressurized modules, trusses and solar panels.

It truly is a feat of human ingenuity.

But did you know that the [International Space Station](#) is one of the brightest objects in the [night sky](#)? And it's easy to see if you know when, and where, to look.

In fact, with your ability to find the station you can amaze your friends and neighbours.

The best place to start is [NASA's Spot the Station website](#). Enter your Country, Region, City along with an email address or mobile phone number. Then give your preference for notifications in the evening, morning or both and that's it.

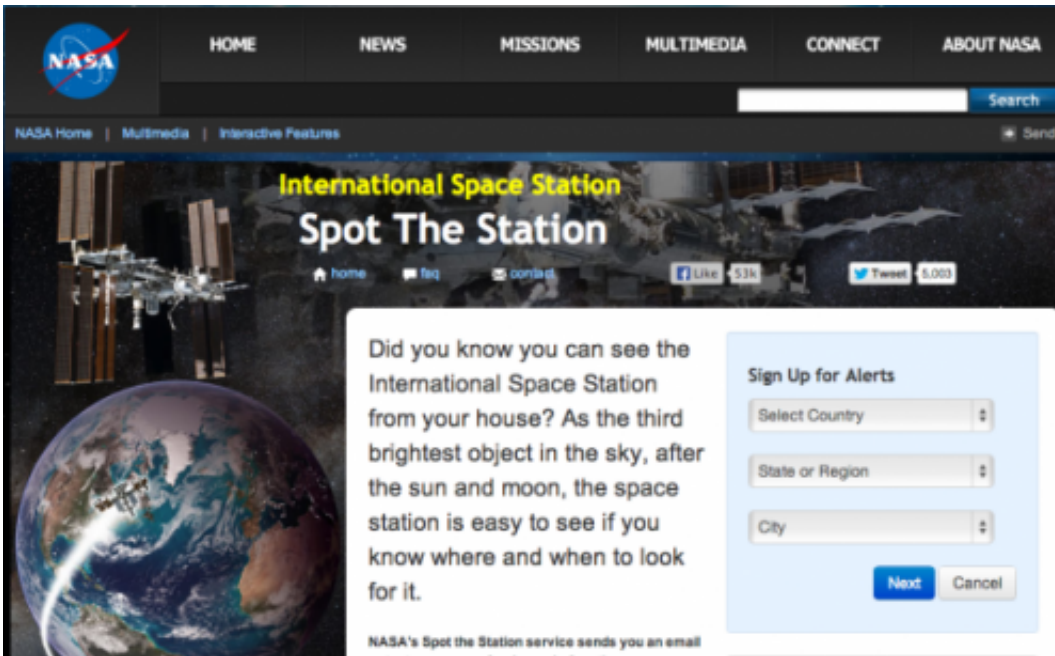


Station's path across the sky.

About twelve hours before the station is due to fly overhead, you'll get a notification from [NASA](#). Depending on your location, you might get notified a couple of times a week, or as rarely as once a month. As soon

as you get the notification, create an alarm on your phone for about a minute before the flyover.

When the alarm goes off, take your friends outside and look to the West.



NASA's Spot the Station Website.

The station orbits the Earth from West to East, so you'll see it appear on the Western horizon as a very bright star, moving rapidly across the sky. It will take only few minutes to cross the entire sky.

The station moves so quickly if you're using a telescope you will have a tough time tracking its movement. A nice pair of [binoculars](#) will make it look a lot brighter, and even let you see the H-shape of its [solar panels](#). But even viewing it with the naked eye is a great experience.

NASA's website is just one of the many ways you can get notifications.

If you use Twitter, follow [@twisst](#). They can figure out your location and then send you a notification when the station is about to fly overhead via Twitter.

There are also dozens of Android and iPhone apps that will perform this function; many of which are free to use.

If you've never seen the station, head on over to NASA and set up a notification right away.

Then kick back and let orbital mechanics bring the station to your backyard at a time that's convenient for you.

Want more details? We've got a detailed guide on how to [View the International Space Station for Beginners](#), and [How to Photograph the International Space Station](#).

Source: [Universe Today](#)

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