

Retired shuttle paired with space lab (Update)

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The space shuttle Endeavour has been paired once again with a space lab and storage pod it used on some missions, as the countdown to its final exhibit continues at the California Science Center in Los Angeles.

A crew on Thursday delicately positioned the 3,000-pound (1,360-kilogram) portable lab and pod inside the orbiter's huge cargo bay, the Los Angeles Times reported. Workers also installed a replica robotic arm, airlock and docking system.

The installations move the Endeavour one step closer to becoming the nation's most complete iteration of a grounded shuttle on display.

The final exhibit is still four years away from being complete. But visitors to the temporary exhibit site will get a rare, brief chance to see Endeavour with both cargo bay doors open before they are closed again for more work after Oct. 21.

None of the other shuttles on display has equipment in the cargo bay, according to the newspaper. Endeavour will also be the only one of the three retired shuttles that orbited the Earth—Endeavour, Atlantis and Discovery—to be posed with its nose pointing up, toward space.

"Just like it's ready to launch," said Jeffrey Rudolph, president of the Science Center.

In its final pose, the cargo doors will be open and people will be able to

peer inside the craft, which was a workhorse during its two decades in flight.

The Times said the next big steps for the Endeavour exhibit will probably happen next year, when construction of the \$250-million Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center—its eventual home—begins.

The museum has so far raised about \$100 million of the \$250 million needed to complete it. The center is expected to open in 2018.

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