

ESA's next astronaut to go into space arrives at launch site

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ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Centre shortly before leaving to Baikonur, Kazakhstan, his last destination before heading to the International Space Station in the night of 2 September 2015. Andreas's mission only lasts ten days so his schedule is tightly packed with European experiments to test new technologies and operational techniques for future space missions. Andreas will drive three different rovers in two experiments from 400 km above while he orbits Earth. Credit: Andreas Mogensen

ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen, Soyuz spacecraft commander Sergei Volkov and Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov arrived in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, yesterday. This is their last destination before heading to the International Space Station in the night of 2 September.

The trio will spend their last two weeks on Earth with technicians and medical staff to make sure everything is ready for the mission.

"We had a great welcome in Kazakhstan and I am looking forward to the last phase before launch," says Andreas.

Their schedule includes final checks to make sure their spacecraft is fit for travel, refresher training on Space Station systems and many medical examinations. They will spend their last days in quarantine to avoid taking unwanted bacteria or viruses to their colleagues waiting for them on the International Space Station.

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Much of the equipment that Andreas needs for his experiments will fly to the Space Station with him in the Soyuz spacecraft, including a radiation monitoring device, the 'SkinSuit' designed to alleviate astronaut back problems and a new type of filter that mimics nature to purify water.

These experiments will be packed into the Soyuz on 27 August. Andreas, Sergei and Aidyn have an extra day to prepare their personal belongings that they wish to take with them.

ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet, who is Andreas's backup on this

mission, also arrived at Baikonur yesterday with the rest of the backup crew – on a different plane for safety purposes.

Throughout the 'iriss' mission, ESA will publish frequent blog posts and updates via the @esaoperations Twitter account to showcase the work done at the Columbus Control Centre in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany, and the researchers from all over Europe.



ESA astronaut Alexander Gerst took this image circling Earth on the International Space Station during his six-month Blue Dot mission in 2014. Alexander commented: " History alive: Yuri Gagarin launched into space from this very place 53 years ago. Max Surayev, Reid Wiseman and I just 53 days ago." Credit: ESA/NASA



From left: Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov, Soyuz spacecraft commander Sergei Volkov and ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen during their final Soyuz spacecraft exams at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Moscow, Russia, on 7 August 2015. The trio will leave Earth for the International Space Station on 2 September for a ten-day mission. Credit: GCTC

Provided by European Space Agency

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