

UK astronaut dreams of heavenly Christmas pudding

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Brushing off any last-minute nerves, Britain's first astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS) insists he is more concerned about his out-of-this-world Christmas dinner than potential disaster.

"I honestly don't have any fear at all, the only fear I have is forgetting something in my bag," Tim Peake told a press conference Friday.

The former helicopter pilot blasts off on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on December 15, and is set for a five-month mission on the ISS.

Despite being away for Christmas, Peake is hoping an astronomic, gastronomic treat will inspire festive cheer.

"I have heard a Christmas pudding is making its way to the [space station](#), I will be enjoying that," he said.

"Also, some of the meals school kids have prepared for me in conjunction with (celebrity chef) Heston Blumenthal are on board the space station waiting for me. One of them is a bacon sandwich."

The 43-year-old will become only the second Briton in space, after Helen Sharman's visit to the Mir space station in 1991.

"It's a dream come true," he told Friday's packed press conference, held at London's Science Museum.

"Major Tim", who joked that he had no plans to reprise David Bowie's cosmic hit "Major Tom" for the journey, said his military background would stand him in good stead.

"Before doing this job, I was a helicopter test pilot for 18 years and experienced more risk on a day-to-day basis," he said.

"One of the great things about the training is that it prepares you so well to every eventuality, you almost expect something to happen.

"I've not sat in a Soyuz simulation yet where we haven't had a catastrophic failure at some point," added the European Space Agency astronaut.

Spacewalk dream

Peake will be joined by US astronaut Tim Kopra and will be captained by experienced Russian Yuri Malenchenko, who has already completed five missions.

The Soyuz are the only vessels able to ferry crew to and from ISS since the US halted the use of its craft.

Peake said that by military standards, "a six-month deployment is not that long", but admitted he would be pining for "fresh air" and beer during his trip.

"It will be an extremely busy mission, I won't feel time passing," he said.

The crew are due to carry out 265 experiments and Peake hopes to realise his dream of a spacewalk.

"The opportunity to do a spacewalk is hugely exciting, but that may or

may not occur," he said.

The astronaut is not expecting any alien encounters, but said he "certainly believes in life-forms on other planets... but not little green men".

He also professed a love of sci-fi movies, particularly recent releases "Gravity" and "Interstellar".

"They are hugely entertaining, I watched them all," he said. "If they get people to engage in space, then I'm 100 percent behind them.

"As for 'Interstellar', anyone who tries to take on gravitational time dilation in a movie gets a big hand of respect."

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