

Tracking Tim's iceberg

March 31 2016



Credit: ESA/NASA

ESA astronaut Tim Peake saw this iceberg from the International Space Station 400 km above Earth on 27 March 2016 during his six-month Principia mission.

Tim commented: "Granted – not the most exciting pic ever but this

[iceberg](#) drifting off Antarctica is about the size of London."

We tracked down the iceberg with the help of Leif Toudal from the Danish Meteorological Institute, ably assisted by [Europe's Sentinel-1A radar satellite](#) and NASA's Aqua satellite, both flying well above the Space Station at roughly 700 km.

Thanks to Leif and his spaceborne assistants, we now know that the iceberg in Tim's picture is "A56" and is around 26 km by 13 km, meaning it would fit inside London's Circular Road along its length with room to spare over its width. It has been estimated to be 30 m high, which means it could extend 270 m below the sea, considering most icebergs conceal 90% of their volume underwater.

A56 originates from the Bellinghousen Sea and has been drifting around the area for at least nine months, slowly heading northeast into the Atlantic Ocean, floating more than 1500 km since July 2015. It is now off the coast of the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

The International Space Station's orbit offers no clear view of Antarctica and a picture of an iceberg taken by an astronaut in [space](#) is a rare occurrence. Sentinel-1, however, is designed for continuous monitoring of sea ice and icebergs in the polar regions. Its advanced radar provides images regardless of weather or darkness, making it an invaluable tool for monitoring our environment and supporting ship navigation through these treacherous waters. View the very same A56 iceberg as seen by Sentinel-1A's radar on 23 July 2015 in the image to the right.

Provided by European Space Agency

Citation: Tracking Tim's iceberg (2016, March 31) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-03-tracking-tim-iceberg.html>

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