

Dream coming true for ISS-bound rookie French astronaut

October 26 2016



(L-R): France's astronaut Thomas Pesquet, Russia's cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and US astronaut Peggy Whitson in front of a Soyuz space vehicle simulator during an examination training session at the Gagarin Cosmonauts' Training Centre in Star City

First-time French astronaut Thomas Pesquet said Wednesday he was thrilled to go to space with two veterans from Russia and US, though slightly worried that they wouldn't like his saxophone music.

"It's always been a dream for me to go to space," said Pesquet, 38, who showed off his [language skills](#) replying to press conference questions in Russian, English, and French.

Pesquet, the first French national to be sent to the ISS by the European Space Agency since 2008, is expected to blast off on November 16 aboard a Soyuz spacecraft together with his more experienced colleagues: Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitskiy, 45, and American Peggy Witson, 56.

The crew, part of ISS's 50th expedition since the year 2000, will stay in space until May 2017 planning a range of experiments for their respective space agencies in cell biology, combustion, and muscle research.

Pesquet said he'd even like to practise his saxophone—once the instrument makes it to space with one of the forthcoming cargo shipments—if the rest of the team doesn't mind.

"Maybe you guys don't want me to?" he asked his crewmates as the trio faced the media in the Russian space agency's training centre in the Moscow region. "I'll probably be a pain for everybody."

Witson, a third-time space traveller, will assume command of the [space station](#) and see her country vote for president from space on November 8.

"We have a chance to vote early so I did that before I left the US," she assured. "We had planned in advance."

Novitskiy, who will travel to the station the second time, said he envies Pesquet's rookie visit and advised him to keep a diary.

"The sensation of microgravity does not get any duller with age and experience," he said. "At the same time, I am envious of Thomas who is yet to enjoy it."

"It's like first love," he said.

Pesquet said he had made mistakes during training but was lucky to have two older teammates. "I don't think I've ever seen these guys in a bad mood, and that says a lot about morale," he said.

The three will join American astronaut Shane Kimbrough and two Russian cosmonauts Andrei Borisenko and Sergey Ryzhikov who arrived to the ISS last Friday.

The other three current ISS crew members, Kate Rubins of NASA, Anatoly Ivanishin of Roscosmos and Takuya Onishi of the Japan Aerospace Exploration agency, are expected to depart the station this weekend, landing in Kazakhstan Sunday.

© 2016 AFP

Citation: Dream coming true for ISS-bound rookie French astronaut (2016, October 26)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2016-10-true-iss-bound-rookie-french-astronaut.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--