

# Spacewalk a success for French, US astronauts

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French astronaut Thomas Pesquet displays his juggling and eating skills during a light moment on the International Space Station

A French and an American astronaut floated outside the International Space Station Friday on a successful spacewalk to upgrade the orbiting outpost for the arrival of future space crews.

Outfitted in bulky white spacesuits, helmets and gloves, France's Thomas

Pesquet, 39, and American Shane Kimbrough, 49, completed their work right on schedule, after six hours and 34 minutes in the vacuum of space.

"Another great example of international collaboration and the work that we can do when we get a great team like this together," said Jessica Meir, a NASA astronaut who coordinated the [spacewalk](#) from mission control in Houston.

The goal for Friday's outing was to prepare for the installation of the second of two parking spots for space taxis, known as the International Docking Adapters.

New crew spaceships, being designed by SpaceX and Boeing, will use them when they begin flying [astronauts](#) to the station in the coming years, as early as 2018.

Currently, the only way the world's astronauts can reach orbit is by buying a ride aboard Russia's Soyuz capsules, at \$81 million per seat.

Pesquet spent the first part of his spacewalk inspecting a radiator valve suspected of a small ammonia leak, but was unable to find evidence of any problems.

Then, he lubricated the [space station](#)'s robotic arm, Dextre, which is employed to grab approaching cargo ships and move items around outside.

Meanwhile, Kimbrough disconnected cables and electrical connections on the pressurized mating adapter (PMA-3) to prepare for its move Thursday, March 30, during another spacewalk.

In its new location, it will become the home for the second of two International Docking Adapters, to be delivered on a future flight of a

SpaceX Dragon cargo ship.

Kimbrough also worked on installing new cameras and computer equipment outside the space station.

Pesquet and Kimbrough worked separately on their tasks outside the space station, a symbol of international cooperation which has been continuously inhabited by global astronauts for the past 17 years.

## **'Gee-whiz moment'**

Friday's spacewalk was the second of Pesquet's career, and the fifth for Kimbrough.

"Going outside is always a gee-whiz moment for me," Kimbrough said in an interview on NASA television this week, adding that it was also "really satisfying" to see Pesquet perform so well on his first spacewalk back in January.

Pesquet is the fourth Frenchman to ever walk in space, and the 11th European.

The next outing on March 30 will include Kimbrough and American astronaut Peggy Whitson, making the eighth spacewalk of her career.

A third spacewalk on April 6 is to include Pesquet and Whitson.

Next month, the 57-year-old Whitson will set a new record for spacewalks by a female astronaut, and will also break the record for most number of days spent in space by an American.

The current US record of 534 days is held by NASA astronaut Jeff Williams.

Russian cosmonaut Gennady Padalka holds the record for the most cumulative days ever in [space](#), at 879 days over five career trips.

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