

SpaceX poised for 50th launch of Falcon 9 rocket

March 5 2018



SpaceX is poised to make its 50th launch of a Falcon 9 rocket, like this one used in September to send an unmanned X-37B drone into space

SpaceX is poised for the 50th launch of its signature Falcon 9 rocket early Tuesday, marking a swift ascent to a milestone many aerospace

giants take far longer to attain.

The launch of the Falcon 9 carrying the Hispasat, a Spanish telecommunications and broadband [satellite](#), is scheduled for 12:33 am (0533 GMT) from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

"At six metric tons and almost the size of a city bus, it will be the largest geostationary satellite we've ever flown," SpaceX chief executive Elon Musk said on Twitter.

The satellite aims to expand television, broadband and telecommunications service in Europe and Northwest Africa.

The Falcon 9 first flew in 2010, and since then has become the California-based company's workhorse for sending supplies to the International Space Station, launching commercial satellites and secretive government payloads.

Powered by nine Merlin engines, the Falcon 9's first stage has also mastered the art of landing upright on solid ground or on floating platforms in the ocean after launch.

These "recycled" [rocket launches](#) are part of SpaceX's goal to lower the cost of spaceflight and re-use expensive rocket parts instead of tossing them in the ocean after each launch.

But SpaceX will not attempt to land Falcon 9's booster Tuesday "due to unfavorable weather conditions in the recovery area off of Florida's Atlantic Coast," said a company statement.

According to the website ArsTechnica, SpaceX reaching 50 launches is "double the maximum number of flights the Atlas V (2014 and 2015) and space shuttle (1985) performed during their most prolific years."

Musk's grand visions for space exploration include sending tourists into orbit around the Moon and eventually, colonizing Mars.

Last month, SpaceX launched its monster Falcon Heavy rocket—three times as powerful as the Falcon 9—for the first time, propelling Musk's own Tesla roadster with a spacesuit-clad dummy at the wheel into an orbit near Mars.

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Citation: SpaceX poised for 50th launch of Falcon 9 rocket (2018, March 5) retrieved 18 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-spacex-poised-50th-falcon-rocket.html>

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