Image: Orbital resupply vehicle departs ISS

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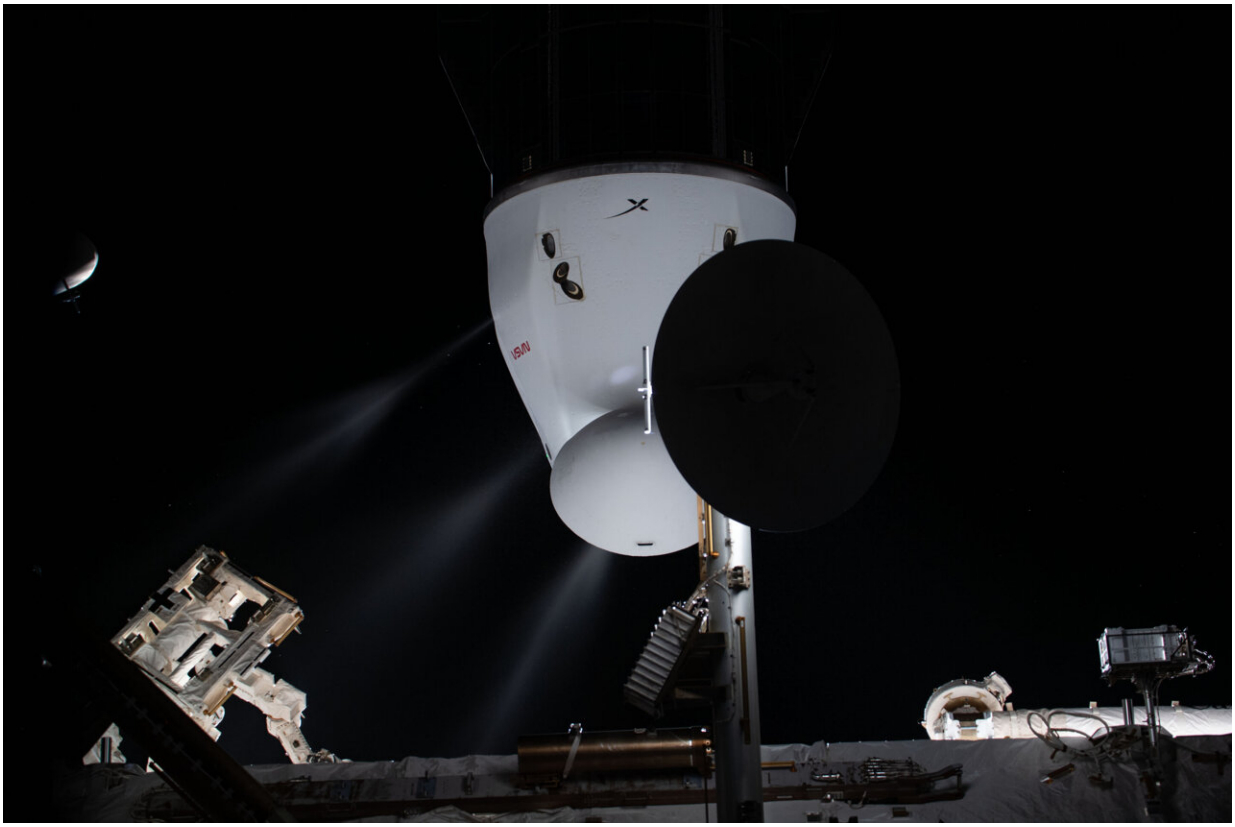

Credit: ESA/NASA-M.Maurer

Astronauts aboard the International Space Station farewelled over 2000 kg of scientific experiments and hardware on Sunday 23 January as a cargo Dragon spacecraft began its return to Earth.

ESA astronaut Matthias Maurer captured the resupply vehicle in all its

glory as it departed the orbital outpost at 15:40 GMT/16:40 CET. It splashed down approximately 29 hours later off the coast of Florida, U.S..

The SpaceX spacecraft arrived at the Space Station just before Christmas, bringing new experiments alongside Christmas treats. It returned with a bellyful of science, including several European experiments that were quickly transported to NASA's Space Station Processing Facility at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, and other items that flew with ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet during his Alpha mission.

Among the experiments were an investigation into the effect of microgravity on resting muscle tone known as Myotones, cell cultures for the Cytoskeleton experiment that looks at how human cells behave in weightlessness, and a new device called Thermo-Mini for continually monitoring core body temperature that you might have seen Matthias sporting on Station.

It also transported cargo relating to Microage, which uses synthetic muscle cells to study muscle degradation aboard the International Space Station, the Blob educational experiment that saw students replicate space research in the classroom using a naturally occurring slime mold, and equipment for the Multiscale Boiling experiment Rubi.

The next resupply vehicle to fly to the Station is a Northrop Grumman Cygnus, expected to be launched no earlier than 19 February 2022. In the meantime, the astronauts of Expedition 66 continue their busy schedule of science and operations in orbit. See Matthias Maurer's Cosmic Kiss mission page for the latest news.

Provided by European Space Agency