

Astronaut crew returning to Earth after six months on ISS

May 5 2022



(L-R front) NASA astronauts Tom Marshburn and Raja Chari and (L-R back) European Space Agency astronaut Matthias Maurer of Germany and NASA astronaut Kayla Barron as they prepared to launch for the ISS.

NASA's Crew-3 mission was returning home to Earth on Thursday after six months aboard the International Space Station.

The SpaceX Dragon Endurance spacecraft with NASA astronauts Kayla Barron, Raja Chari, and Tom Marshburn, as well as European Space Agency astronaut Matthias Maurer undocked from the orbital laboratory overnight.

Their 23.5 hour journey back should see them splash down off the coast of Florida at 12:43 am on Friday (0443 GMT).

They leave behind the one Italian and three American astronauts of Crew-4, and three Russian cosmonauts. Ahead of departure, Marshburn handed command of the station over to Russian Oleg Artemyev.

During their mission, Crew-3 carried out hundreds of [scientific experiments](#), including growing chiles in space to add to knowledge of cultivating crops on long term missions, exploring how concrete hardens in space, and Earth monitoring.

"Every day on @Space_Station is #EarthDay for @NASA_Astronauts since we see how thin the precious layer is that protects everything we know & love as a human race," Crew-3 commander Chari wrote in a tweet.

"Hopefully, @NASA research will help w/ H2O purification & carbon dioxide reductions but the rest is up to us."

Chancellor Olaf Scholz wished Maurer, the 12th German in space, "a good and safe journey back with a [soft landing](#)," thanking him on Twitter for "all the new discoveries in space that are so important for us here on Earth."

Crew-3's expedition came at an increasingly busy time for [commercial space](#).

They welcomed aboard a private crew that included three wealthy businessmen that came and went on another SpaceX Crew Dragon, as well as a Japanese mission that flew on a Soyuz aircraft to the Russian segment.

The ISS now awaits docking with an uncrewed Boeing Starliner capsule, which is set to launch from Florida on May 19.

NASA is looking to certify a second company to ferry astronauts to the region of space called Low Earth Orbit, leaving it to develop its super heavy [space](#) launch system (SLS) rocket for missions to the Moon, and eventually Mars.

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