

China adds science laboratory to its orbiting space station

July 25 2022



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, an image taken off the screen at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Chinese astronauts from left, Cai Xuzhe, Chen Dong and Liu Yang wave from inside the Wentian lab module on Monday, July 25, 2022. China added the laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station Monday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months. Credit: Guo Zhongzheng/Xinhua via AP

China added a laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station Monday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months.

The Wentian laboratory was launched from the Wenchang space base on the tropical island province of Hainan on Sunday with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching.

After 13 hours of flight, it successfully docked with the Tianhe living area of the Tiangong space station at 3:13 a.m. Monday (1913 GMT), according to the China Manned Space Agency.

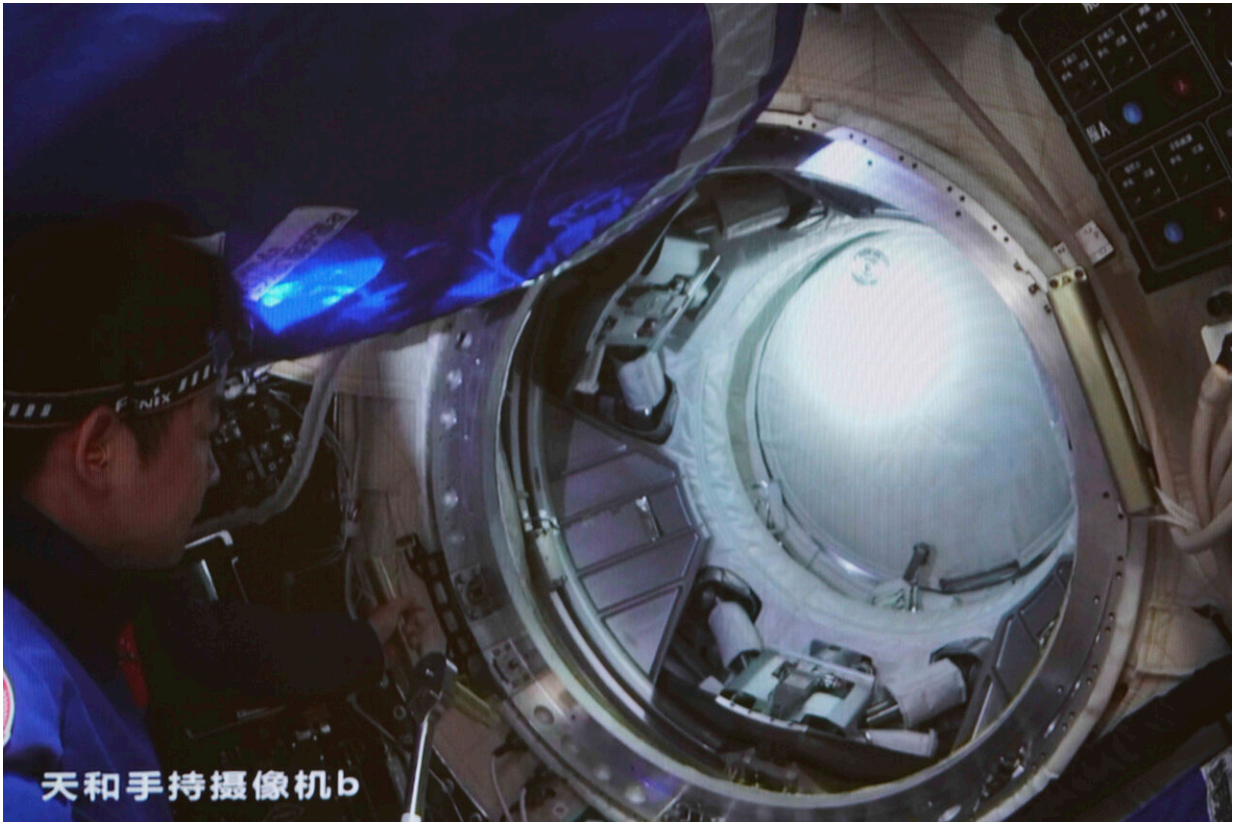
Photos distributed by Xinhua News Agency later showed the three astronauts inside the expanded space station.

The 23-ton Wentian laboratory is designed for science and biology experiments and is heavier than any other single-module spacecraft currently in space, according to the state-owned Global Times.

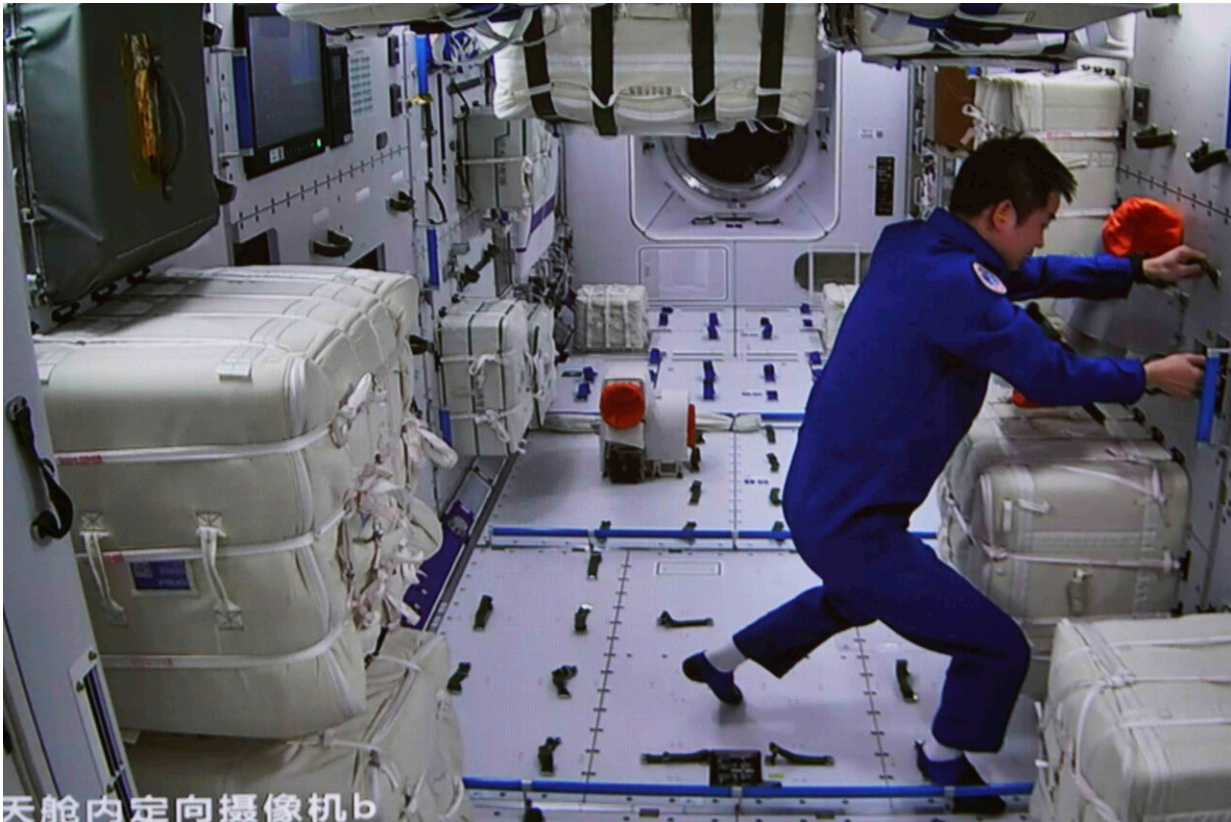
Three astronauts who started their six-month mission aboard the space station [last month](#) oversaw the Wentian's arrival and docking.

A second laboratory segment, the Mengtian, is due to be launched in October and will complete the space station.

A Long March 5B-Y3 rocket, China's most powerful, carried the laboratory module in the third such launch since the Chinese space station entered its construction phase. It was preceded by the Tianzhou-class cargo spacecraft and the Shenzhou-14 crewed spacecraft.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, an image taken off the screen at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Chinese astronaut Chen Dong opening the hatch door of the Wentian lab module on Monday, July 25, 2022. China added the laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station Monday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months. Chinese characters on screen reads "Handheld camera b." Credit: Guo Zhongzheng/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, an image taken off the screen at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Chinese astronaut Chen Dong operate equipment inside the Wentian lab module on Monday, July 25, 2022. China added the laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station Monday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months. Credit: Guo Zhongzheng/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, an image taken off the screen at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Chinese astronaut Chen Dong reacts inside the Wentian lab module on Monday, July 25, 2022. China added the laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station Monday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months. Credit: Guo Zhongzheng/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, the Long March 5B Y3 carrier rocket, carrying Wentian lab module blasts off from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Wenchang in southern China's Hainan Province Sunday, July 24, 2022. On a hot Sunday afternoon, with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching, China launched the Wentian lab module from tropical Hainan Island. Credit: Li Gang/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, people gather at the beach side as they watch the Long March 5B Y3 carrier rocket, carrying Wentian lab module, lift off from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Wenchang in southern China's Hainan Province Sunday, July 24, 2022. On a hot Sunday afternoon, with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching, China launched the Wentian lab module from tropical Hainan Island. Credit: Zhang Liyun/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, the Long March 5B Y3 carrier rocket, carrying Wentian lab module blasts off from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Wenchang in southern China's Hainan Province Sunday, July 24, 2022. On a hot Sunday afternoon, with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching, China launched the Wentian lab module from tropical Hainan Island. Credit: Li Gang/Xinhua via AP

China's space program is run by the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, and has largely proceeded with the Tiangong program without other nations' assistance. The U.S. excluded China from the International Space Station because of its military ties.

China launched its first astronaut into orbit in 2003, making it only the third country to do so on its own after the former Soviet Union and the

U.S. Its space program has landed robot rovers on the moon and placed one on Mars last year. China has also returned lunar samples and officials have discussed a possible crewed mission to the moon.

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