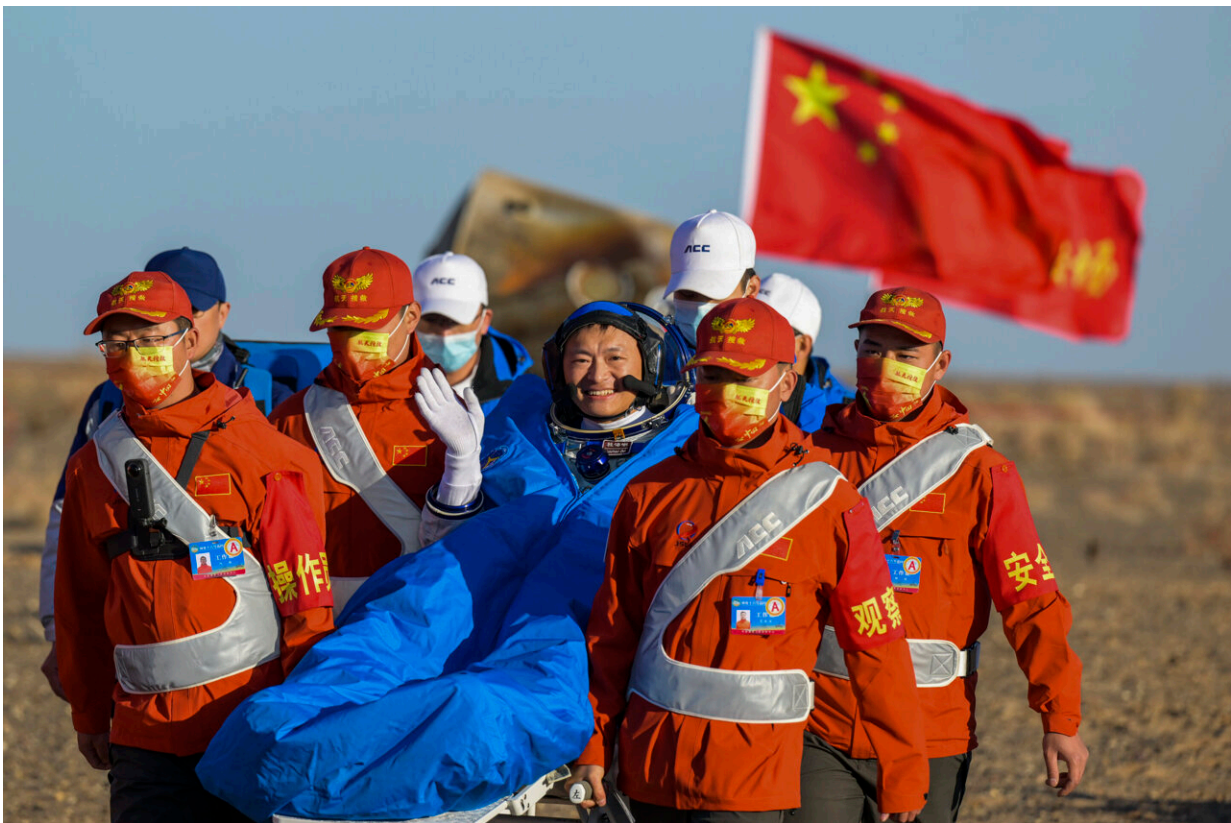


3 astronauts return to Earth after 6-month stay on China's space station

October 31 2023, by Christopher Bodeen



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, astronaut Gui Haichao waves as he is carried out of the re-entry capsule of the Shenzhou-14 manned space mission after it landed successfully at the Dongfeng landing site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2023. The previous crew of China's orbiting space station returned to earth Tuesday morning, all reportedly in good health, amid a sharpening rivalry with the U.S. over space exploration and plans to put astronauts on the moon before 2030. Credit: Li Zhipeng/Xinhua via AP

Three Chinese astronauts returned to Earth on Tuesday morning after six months aboard China's orbiting space station.

Jing Haipeng, Zhu Yangzhu and Gui Haichao emerged in [good health](#) from the return capsule near the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The station's new three-person crew arrived to the Tiangong station last week.

The station is essentially complete, so the new crew will conduct medical and scientific experiments and maintain equipment.

China made its first crewed space mission in 2003 and plans to [put astronauts on the moon](#) before 2030. It has brought samples back from the [lunar surface](#) and landed a rover on the less explored far side of the moon. Future plans include sending a new telescope to probe deep into the universe.

China built its own [space station](#) after it was excluded from the International Space Station, largely due to U.S. concerns over Chinese military control over the national space program.

Beijing has emerged as the chief rival with the U.S. for reaching new milestones in outer space, with extremely limited cooperation between them in the field, as mandated by U.S. law. That mirrors the competition for influence between the world's two largest economies in the technology, trade, military and diplomatic spheres, with China's claim to sovereignty over the South China Sea and self-governing Taiwan particular points of contention.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, astronaut Jing Haipeng waves as he is carried out of the re-entry capsule of the Shenzhou-14 manned space mission after it landed successfully at the Dongfeng landing site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2023. The previous crew of China's orbiting space station returned to earth Tuesday morning, all reportedly in good health, amid a sharpening rivalry with the U.S. over space exploration and plans to put astronauts on the moon before 2030. Credit: Lian Zhen/Xinhua via AP



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, astronaut Zhu Yangzhu waves as he is carried out of the re-entry capsule of the Shenzhou-14 manned space mission after it landed successfully at the Dongfeng landing site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2023. The previous crew of China's orbiting space station returned to earth Tuesday morning, all reportedly in good health, amid a sharpening rivalry with the U.S. over space exploration and plans to put astronauts on the moon before 2030. Credit: Li Gang/Xinhua via AP



A Long March rocket carrying a crew of Chinese astronauts in a Shenzhou-17 spaceship lifts off at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, Thursday, Oct. 26, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Andy Wong



Chinese astronauts for the Shenzhou-17 mission, from left, Jiang Xinlin, Tang Hongbo and Tang Shengjie wave as they attend a send-off ceremony for their manned space mission at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, Thursday, Oct. 26, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Andy Wong

The U.S., meanwhile, aims to put astronauts back on the lunar surface by the end of 2025 as part of a renewed commitment to crewed missions, aided by private sector players such as SpaceX and Blue Origin.

In addition to their lunar programs, the two countries have also separately landed rovers on Mars, and China plans to follow the U.S. in landing a spacecraft on an asteroid.

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