

European cargo freighter undocks from ISS

28 October 2013



The ICC portion of the Automated Transfer Vehicle Albert Einstein, the fourth in a series of lifeline vessels bringing supplies and critical altitude boosts to the International Space Station, being weighed at Kourou space center, French Guiana

Europe's heaviest-ever cargo carrier to the International Space Station undocked on Monday after completing its mission, and will burn up in Earth's atmosphere on Saturday, the NASA space agency said.

Filled with about six tonnes of garbage and waste produced on board the ISS, the Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) separated from the ISS at 0855 GMT, when it was orbiting at about 420 kilometres (260 miles) over Kazakhstan, said a NASA statement.

Dubbed Albert Einstein, Europe's fourth ATV to service the ISS will hover at a safe distance from the orbiting [space station](#) until Saturday, when an engine firing will send it back to the Earth's atmosphere for a planned, complete destruction over an uninhabited area of the Pacific Ocean.

The lifeline craft—the size of a double-decker bus—was rocketed into space from Europe's

spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, on June 5 and docked with the ISS 10 days later.

It ferried a record cargo of about seven tonnes to the ISS—food, fuel, water, oxygen, science experiments and special treats for the orbiting crew.

At nearly 20.2 tonnes, the European Space Agency's penultimate cargo delivery to the ISS was the heaviest payload ever launched by an Ariane rocket. It also left the station with the largest-ever amount of waste, said an ESA statement.

The unmanned vessel is 10 metres (33 feet) long and 4.5 metres (15 feet) in diameter.

One of its key functions was to boost the ISS, constantly falling towards Earth due to atmospheric resistance, back into a higher orbit.

The Albert Einstein followed the hi-tech trail of three others since 2008 that also carried the names of science gurus—the Jules Verne, the Johannes Kepler and the Edoardo Amaldi.

It will be followed next year by the last in ESA's ATV series—the George Lamaitre named for the father of the Big Bang theory of the Universe's creation.

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