

Russian, American ready for a year in space

March 26 2015, byDmitry Lovetsky



From left: U.S. astronaut Scott Kelly, Russian cosmonauts Gennady Padalka and Mikhail Korniyenko, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, attend a news conference in the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, March 26, 2015. The start of the new Soyuz mission is scheduled on Saturday, March 28.(AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)

The Russian astronaut heading off for a year in space says he'll miss the natural landscapes on Earth. His American counterpart jokes he won't miss his twin brother.

Russians Mikhail Kornienko and Gennady Padalka and American Scott Kelly are to launch early Saturday aboard a Soyuz space capsule for the International Space Station. Kelly and Kornienko are to stay there until March 2016, while Padalka will be on a six-month mission.

At a news conference Thursday at the Russian manned-space facility in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, Kornienko said "we will be missing nature, we will be missing landscapes, woods." He admitted that on his previous trip into space in 2010 "I even asked our psychological support folks to send me a calendar with photographs of nature, of rivers, of woods, of lakes."

Kelly was asked if he'd miss his twin brother Mark, who also was an astronaut.

"We're used to this kind of thing," he said. "I've gone longer without seeing him and it was great."

The mission won't be the longest time that a human has spent in space—four Russians spent a year or more aboard the Soviet-built Mir space station in the 1990s.

"The last time we had such a long duration flight was almost 20 years and of course all ... scientific techniques are more advanced than 20 years ago and right now we need to test the capability of a human being to perform such long-duration flights. So this is the main objective of our flight, to test ourselves," said Kornienko."



U.S. astronaut Scott Kelly, crew member of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, attends a news conference in the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, March 26, 2015. The start of the new Soyuz mission is scheduled on Saturday, March 28.(AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)

"One of the differences here is that we're doing it as an international partnership, and if we're going to go beyond low-Earth orbit again, perhaps to Mars, because of the cost and the complexity it will most likely be an international mission so we see this as a stepping stone to that," Kelly said.

"If you're ever going to go to Mars, going from a place like this would be, you know, a step in the right direction," Kelly said of Baikonur, set amid the vast and barren steppes of central Asia.



U.S. astronaut Scott Kelly, right, crew member of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, poses through a safety glass with his brother, Mark Kelly, also an astronaut after a news conference in Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, March 26, 2015. Start of the new Soyuz mission is scheduled on Saturday, March 28.(AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)



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