

Discovery Home at Kennedy Space Center

August 21 2005



The Space Shuttle orbiter Discovery successfully landed at the Shuttle Landing Facility (SLF) at Kennedy Space Center, Fla. Discovery, riding piggy-back on the modified Shuttle Carrier Aircraft (SCA), made a sweep of the Brevard County beaches as it circled for a landing, giving residents a birds-eye view of the duo.

Image: Space Shuttle Discovery still joined to the SCA, on the tarmac at Kennedy Space Center, Fla. Image credit: NASA/KSC

Cheers from media and Kennedy Space Center employees erupted when the 747's wheels touched down. Landing on Runway 15, the vehicle came to a stop where it was then towed to the Mate/Demate Device (MDD) at the SLF. During the next few hours Discovery will be lifted

off the 747. The vehicle will be backed-out and the orbiter will be gently lowered to the runway on its landing gear.

On Monday, the Discovery will be towed by a diesel-powered tractor to the Orbiter Processing Facility (OPF) via a two-mile tow-way strip from the SLF. Once inside the OPF the payload bay doors will be opened and the materials brought back from the International Space Station will be unloaded. After Discovery is inside the processing facility, Mission STS-114 will then be completed.

Space Shuttle Discovery is slated for Mission STS-121 in March, 2006.

NASA announced that the next Space Shuttle mission, STS-121, is now targeted for March 2006. This will be the second test flight to the International Space Station in the Shuttle Return to Flight series. NASA Administrator Mike Griffin and Associate Administrator for Space Operations William Gerstenmaier made the announcement at a briefing on August 18th.

"We are giving ourselves what we hope is plenty of time to evaluate where we are," said Administrator Griffin. "We don't see the tasks remaining before us being as difficult as the path behind us."

A pair of "Tiger Teams" continues to investigate the External Tank foam loss during Discovery's launch on July 26. Gerstenmaier says the teams have identified the major areas of concern and are making good progress on dealing with the problems.

Discovery will be used for STS-121 instead of Atlantis, putting NASA in a better position for future missions to the Space Station. Atlantis will fly the following mission, STS-115, carrying Space Station truss segments which are too heavy to be carried by Discovery. By changing the lineup, the program won't have to fly back to back missions with

Atlantis, as was previously scheduled.

Source: NASA

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