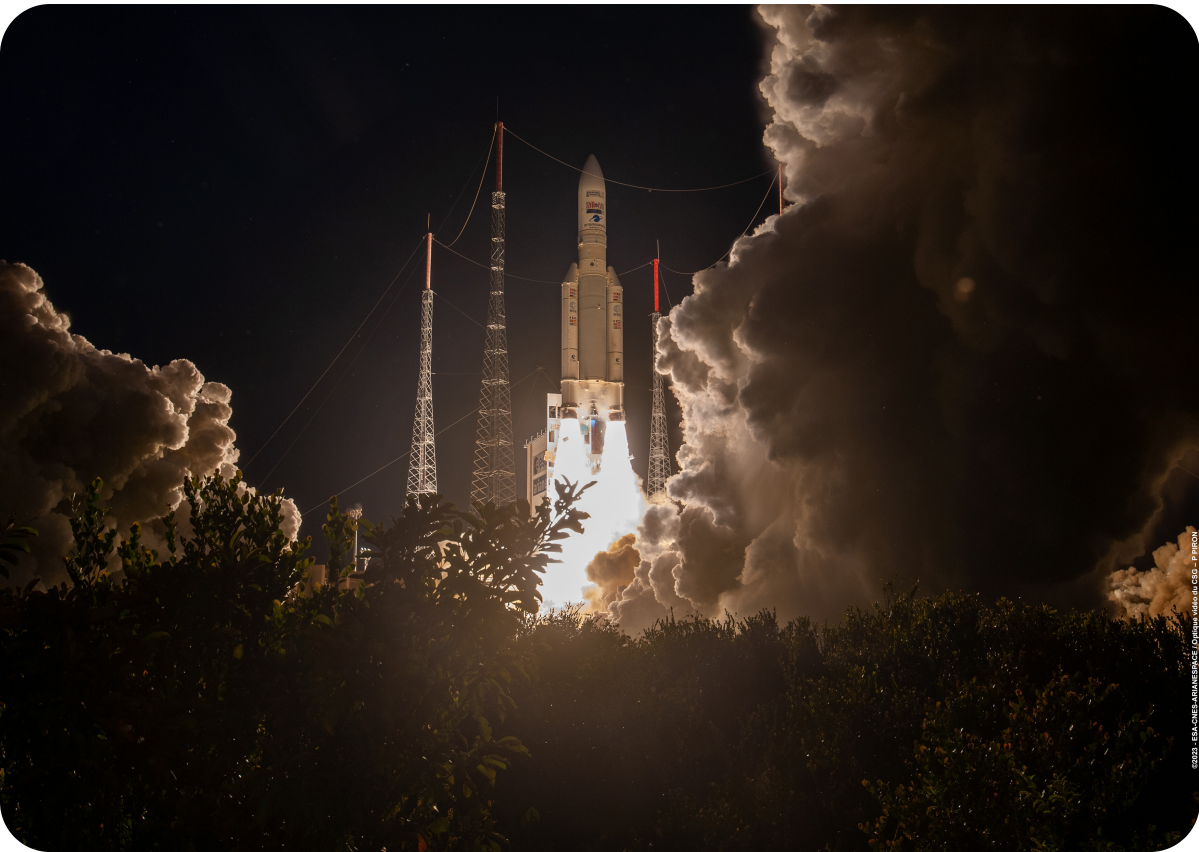


Blast off for ESA’s final ever Ariane 5 rocket launch



Ariane 5 VA261 liftoff
[Access the image](#)

21 July 2023

5 July 2023 is a date to remember for space fans, as it was the last launch of an amazing [ESA Ariane 5 rocket](#)! Blasting off from [Europe’s Spaceport in French Guiana](#), the rocket’s journey took 33 minutes. Its mission was to carry the German aerospace agency DLR’s Heinrich Hertz experimental communications satellite, and the French communications satellite Syracuse 4b, into their planned orbits.

Ariane 5 rockets have an excellent success record, and this time was no different as the mission was completed perfectly! Ariane 5 rockets were first used in 1996, and in total have been used an incredible 117 times! They have carried important satellites and probes into space, including ESA’s [comet-chasing Rosetta](#), the [James Webb Space Telescope](#), and ESA’s [Juice mission to Jupiter](#). Ariane 5 rockets have also been a key part of Europe’s participation in the [International Space Station](#), being used to deliver [Automated Transfer Vehicle](#) resupply craft.

The Ariane series of rockets have an interesting history. Their story begins back in the 1960s, when several European countries joined forces to build a new rocket for the space age, called Europa! This project was unsuccessful, but in 1975 Europe combined different space organisations to form ESA, which took the idea of Europa and transformed it into Ariane. Ariane 1 rockets began launching in 1979, followed by new versions all the way to Ariane 5.

Scientists and engineers are busy putting the finishing touches on the next generation of ESA rockets, [Ariane 6](#)! These will be about half the cost of an Ariane 5, which is a huge saving. It is hoped that the first Ariane 6 launch will take place early next year!

Cool fact: Ariane 5 rockets were not just reliable, but very powerful too! They could carry two large satellites into orbit, or push craft out into deep space.

Ariane 5 bows out in style



[Access the video](#)