

Blast off for ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet!



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18 November 2016

ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet has successfully lifted off from Earth and into space! Along with NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson and Roscosmos commander Oleg Novitsky, the three space explorers are now inside a Soyuz spacecraft orbiting our planet.

The first ten minutes after lift-off were bumpy for the passengers, but now that they are in space everything feels a lot smoother. They have no internet or mobile phones to talk to people on Earth, so instead are using a radio to communicate with ground control. Thomas and his crewmates will spend two days gently changing their orbit until they can safely fly alongside – and then dock – with the International Space Station.

Once Thomas' Soyuz docks with the Space Station, a hatch will be opened and the new crew will board! Thomas will have the chance for a quick video call to friends and family on Earth. Then it will be down to business and his mission, called Proxima, can begin.



Expedition 50 crewmembers greeting audience at the launch pad

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Thomas will certainly be kept busy during his six months in orbit. In his first week he will begin work on an experiment to improve how we test the quality and safety of water, which will be useful both on Earth and in space. Thomas will also be installing special monitors to track how radiation reaches the International Space Station, and his own body!

Thomas is the first French astronaut to visit the International Space Station since 2008, when ESA astronaut Léopold Eyrharts helped to install a European science module called Columbus. In total, Thomas will be working on around 50 European experiments. It is exciting to think about what he will help discover!

Cool fact: A Soyuz is about the size of a car, and this type of craft has been carrying people to and from space for almost 50 years.

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