

Satellite twin Sentinel-1B launched into space



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A high-tech ESA satellite called Sentinel-1B was successfully launched into space yesterday! Blast-off was from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, using a powerful Soyuz rocket.

Sentinel-1B has an identical twin called Sentinel-1A already in orbit around Earth. Now the two satellites will whizz around our planet, always on opposite sides to each other. So if one is above the Earth's daytime side, the other will be over the nighttime side. This means they can monitor the Earth much more effectively than if they were operating on their own.

The Sentinel satellites are packed with advanced equipment including a radar system that allows them to take pictures of Earth's surface even through cloud and rain. They will use this to watch ice around the polar caps, track oil spills, map forests, check levels of sea-life, and much more!



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Three mini-satellites called CubeSats also hitched a ride into space on Sentinel-1B's rocket. CubeSats are shaped like – you guessed it, cubes! They are very small, with each side measuring only 10cm long. Being so compact and light means that they are easier and cheaper to launch into space.

The three CubeSats launched with Sentinel-1B were made by university students working with ESA through a special programme called 'Fly Your Satellite!' They will conduct experiments such as testing special solar cells to produce energy from sunlight.

Cool fact: A fourth satellite hitched a lift with Sentinel-1B too. Called MicroSCOPE, it was made by the French Space Agency (CNES) and will conduct physics experiments.

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