

Sentinel satellite launched!

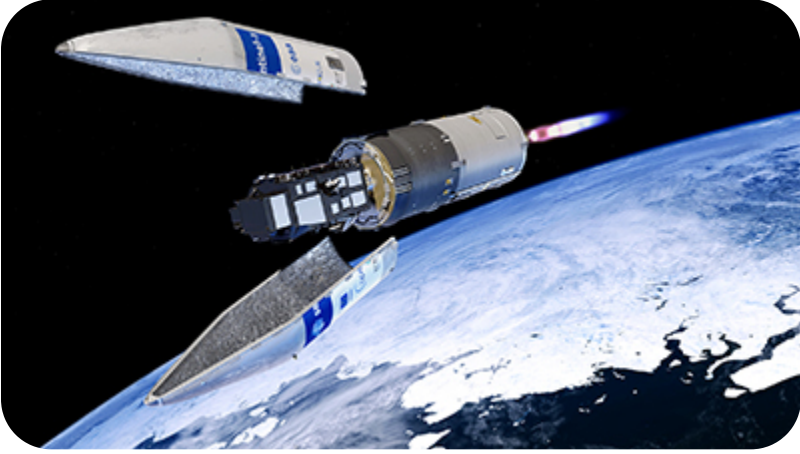


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16 February 2016

ESA scientists have announced that their Sentinel-3 satellite has successfully blasted off and is now in orbit around Earth!

Sentinel-3 is the latest in a fleet of advanced satellites whose mission is to study Earth's land, oceans, and atmosphere.



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The satellite was carried into space on a rocket launched from Plesetsk, which is a spaceport in Russia. Liftoff was at 20:57 local time, and 92 minutes later the first signals from the satellite were received by the very happy – and relieved! – ground crew.

Sentinel-3's primary mission is to study Earth's oceans. Covering 70% of the planet, monitoring oceans is a way of us checking how healthy the Earth is. The satellite will measure the temperature, colour and height of the sea surface, as well as the thickness of sea ice. Our planet's water is an important resource, and one we need to protect!

Now that Sentinel-3 is in space it can begin the early orbit phase, which is when the on-board instruments are slowly turned on and mission scientists check that everything is working properly. The position of the satellite will be gently adjusted as well. Altogether, the early orbit phase should take three days. Then more instrument tests are in store to ensure that data gathered by the satellite is as accurate as it can be. If all these tests are passed then Sentinel-3's full mission will commence in five months.

Data from Sentinel-3 will be used by people all over the world, for free. What would you use Sentinel satellite data for?

Cool fact: The full name of this satellite is Sentinel-3A. It has a twin, called Sentinel-3B, which will launch next year.

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