

ESA astronaut Matthias Maurer makes journey of a lifetime to the International Space Station



ESA astronaut Matthias Maurer has been training hard for his mission to the ISS

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Matthias travelled to the ISS onboard a craft called a SpaceX Crew Dragon loaded onto a powerful Falcon 9 rocket. It launched from Florida in the USA on 11 November, and he was accompanied by NASA astronauts Raja Chari, Thomas Marshburn, and Kayla Barron. This intrepid crew were blasted into orbit in just 8 minutes and 48 seconds! Then, the SpaceX Crew Dragon began the slower procedure of moving close to the ISS, matching its speed to avoid any collisions. The nose cone of the Space X Crew Dragon then opened up to reveal a docking port, which connected to the ISS so that Matthias and his friends could disembark!

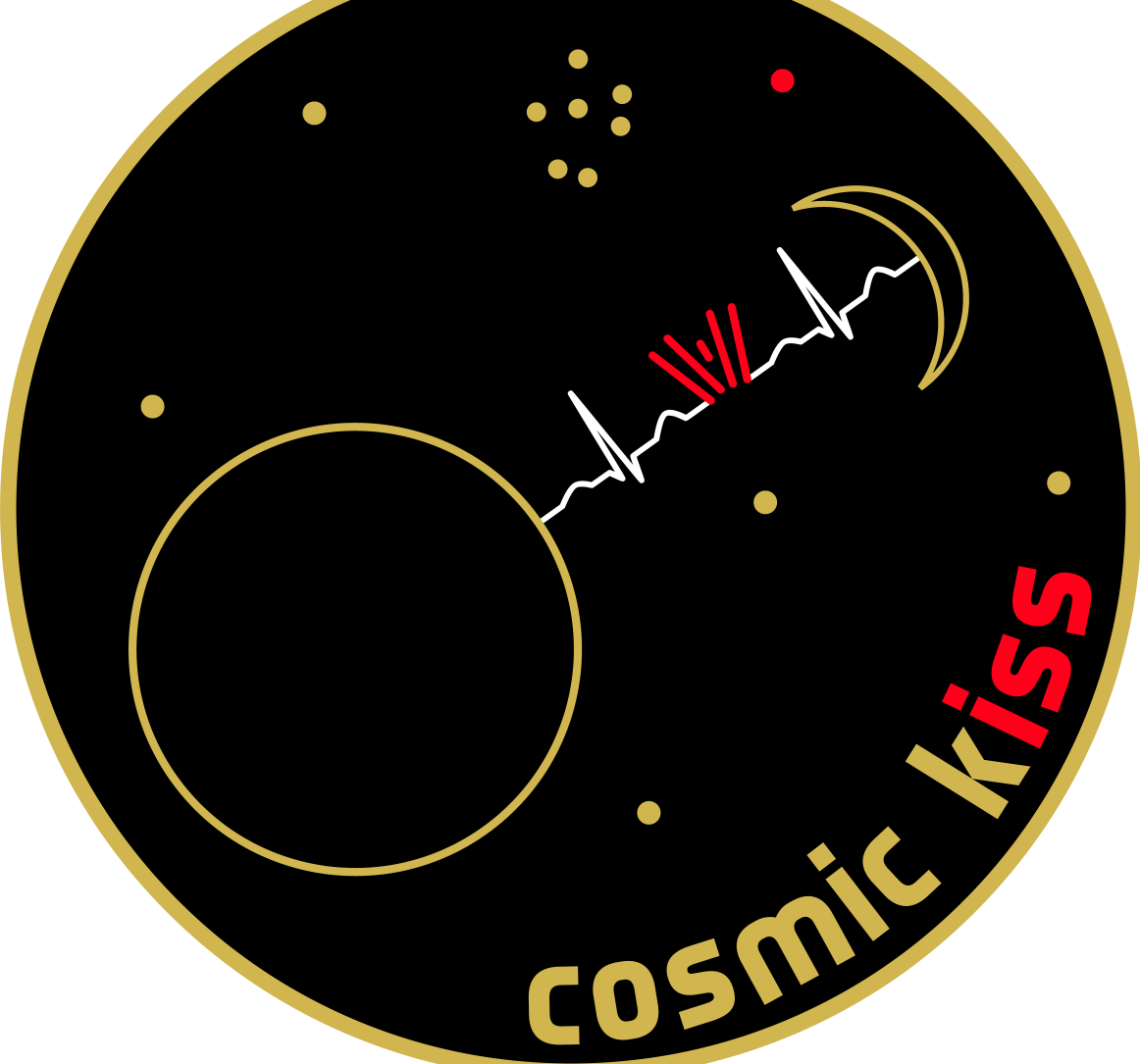


Crew-3 launch to the Space Station

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Said Matthias before the launch, "I'm looking forward to my first spaceflight because it will be an incredible experience, not only for me as a human being far from home but also for the opportunity to support scientific research on behalf of the researchers on Earth."

The ISS is a science laboratory, and during his time in orbit Matthias will help carry out over 100 experiments. These will include testing new materials in space, which Matthias will be perfect for considering he is trained as a materials scientist! The results of the experiments will advance our knowledge, helping to make our lives on Earth better as well as preparing future astronauts for space exploration even further from our home planet.



Matthias' Cosmic Kiss mission patch. Copyright: ESA

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For his first two weeks aboard the ISS, much of Matthias' time will be spent adjusting to weightlessness and the routines of life in space. During his stay, he will exercise for two hours a day, six days a week. You need to work hard to keep your body healthy in space! As well as working on his experiments, Matthias will also have time every day to enjoy video calls with his family and friends on Earth. At the weekends he will help to keep the ISS nice and tidy, as well as having some spare time just to himself.



Matthias Maurer

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Matthias' Cosmic Kiss mission is so named because the ISS is like a cosmic kiss that unites us and brings light to the unknown. It has a special mission patch with colours full of meaning;

- Black represents the Universe and its mysteries that we seek to understand.
- Red stands for love and passion, as well as the soil of Mars that future astronauts will collect.
- Gold is the colour of stars that share their warmth and light to enable life.
- White stands for technology and scientific progress, bringing light into the dark.

Matthias has lots of friends onboard the ISS, and he has been particularly looking forward to seeing fellow ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet. Currently the Station Commander, Thomas is now helping Matthias get used to life in orbit, giving as many useful tips as possible before his own mission ends and he returns to Earth.

Can you think of any experiments you would like Matthias to carry out during his stay onboard the ISS? What would you like to find out?

Cool fact: Now that Matthias' Space X Crew Dragon has docked with the ISS, it will stay there for the entire Cosmic Kiss mission, acting as a kind of lifeboat in case there's an emergency and the astronauts need to get back to Earth in a hurry.

