

SpaceX launches 4 astronauts to Space Station

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NASA and Elon Musk's commercial rocket company SpaceX launched a new four-astronaut team on a flight to the International Space Station on Friday, the first crew ever propelled into orbit by a rocket booster recycled from a previous spaceflight.

The company's Crew Dragon capsule Endeavour, also making its second flight, streaked into the darkened pre-dawn sky atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket as its nine Merlin engines roared to life at 5:49 a.m. (0949 GMT) from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Key Highlights

- The crew is due to arrive at the space station, orbiting some 250 miles (400 km) above Earth, early on Saturday following a flight of about 23 hours. On the way they will have time to dine on pre-packaged meals and snacks and to get some sleep.
- Within 10 minutes of launch, the rocket's second stage had delivered the crew capsule to Earth orbit, traveling at nearly 17,000 miles per hour, according to launch commentators.
- The rocket's first stage, meanwhile, descended back to Earth and touched down safely on a landing platform floating in the Atlantic on a drone ship affectionately named Of Course I Still Love You.
- The mission marks the second "operational" space station team launched by NASA aboard a Crew Dragon capsule since human spaceflights resumed from American soil last year, following a nine-year hiatus at the end of the U.S. space shuttle program in 2011.

- It is also the third crewed flight launched into orbit in 11 months under NASA's fledgling public-private partnership with SpaceX, the rocket company founded in 2002 by Musk, who is also CEO of electric car maker Tesla Inc

SOURCE: *BBC News*