

Follow live Jules Verne ATV's first attempt to dock with the International Space Station



Artist's impression of ATV Jules Verne approaching the International Space Station.

After several days spent in a parking orbit 2000 km ahead of the ISS, Jules Verne ATV is now ready to join up with the International Space Station. This first docking attempt can be followed live on 3 April 2008 from 15:30 CEST onwards from one of the European participating centres.

One hour and 6 minutes after lift-off of the Ariane-5 ES launcher from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, on 9 March 2008 at 05:03 CET, Jules Verne ATV was placed in a circular orbit at 51.6° relative to the equator. At that point in time, the Guiana Space Centre transferred mission authority to ESA's ATV Control Centre located at the CNES site in Toulouse. Jules Verne ATV was then positioned 2000 km from the ISS while awaiting US Space Shuttle Endeavour's return to Earth on the night of 26 to 27 March.

In the next few days, the CNES and ESA operational teams, supported by the teams of the ATV prime contractor, Astrium, will carry out manoeuvres aimed at positioning the ATV near the ISS and beginning the final approach phase.

The two main manoeuvres (Demoday 1 and Demoday 2), currently scheduled for 29 and 31 March, are intended to demonstrate the ATV's ability to dock entirely safely with the ISS and, in particular, to perform an escape manoeuvre commanded by the ISS crew when Jules Verne is just 12 metres away from the station.

The docking of Jules Verne ATV is scheduled for 3 April at 16:41 CEST. The final decision on whether to proceed with this manoeuvre will be taken by the ISS Mission Management Team in consultation with the European partners only 24 hours before the operations. For this first attempt, ESA and CNES will be organising live transmission of the event from the ATV Control Centre at CNES in Toulouse to the various European sites.

The ATV Control Centre at CNES in Toulouse will act as focal point for media in France and will be home to experts who will be on hand for interviews and background information.

For more information and updates on Jules Verne ATV, including live streaming of Demoday 2 on 31 March (video feed courtesy NASA TV) and the first docking attempt on 3 April see: <http://www.esa.int/atv>

Source: European Space Agency

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