

Space Shuttle Discovery Arrives at Launch Pad, Countdown Test Set



Access platforms at Launch Pad 39A are moved into position against Space Shuttle Discovery. Discovery arrived at its seaside launch pad and was hard down at 6:06 a.m. EDT on May 3. Photo credit: NASA/Troy Cryder

After safely reaching its launch pad at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, space shuttle Discovery now awaits its next major milestone for the upcoming STS-124 mission. A launch dress rehearsal, known as the terminal countdown demonstration test, is scheduled to take place at Kennedy from May 6 to 9.

Discovery arrived at the pad at 4:25 a.m. EDT Saturday on top of a giant crawler-transporter. The crawler-transporter left Kennedy's Vehicle Assembly Building at 11:47 p.m. Friday, traveling less than 1 mph during the 3.4-mile journey. The shuttle was secured on the launch pad at 6:06 a.m. Saturday.

Discovery is targeted to launch May 31 on a 13-day mission to the International Space Station. The shuttle's seven crew members will deliver the Kibo laboratory's large Japanese Pressurized Module, or JPM, and its remote manipulator system to the International Space Station. Three spacewalks will be conducted during the flight.

Mark Kelly will command the STS-124 mission. Ken Ham will be the pilot. The mission specialists are Karen Nyberg, Ron Garan, Mike Fossum, Greg Chamitoff and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide. Chamitoff will remain on the station as a resident crew member, replacing station Flight Engineer Garrett Reisman, who will return home on Discovery.

The STS-124 astronauts and ground crews will participate in the practice countdown. The terminal countdown demonstration test provides each shuttle crew with an opportunity to participate in various simulated countdown activities, including equipment familiarization and emergency training.

STS-124 is the 123rd shuttle flight, the 35th flight for Discovery and the 26th flight to the station.

Source: NASA

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