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SpaceX Crew Reaches International Space Station in Just 15 Hours

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A new team of astronauts has arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) just 15 hours after launching from Florida, marking one of the quickest journeys to the orbiting

outpost by an American spacecraft. The four-member crew, representing the United States, Russia and Japan, docked aboard a SpaceX capsule on Saturday following their launch from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Kennedy Space Center.

The arriving crew includes NASA astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Kimiya Yui of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and Oleg Platonov of Roscosmos, the Russian state space agency. Each astronaut was originally assigned to different missions but was reassigned due to changes in spacecraft availability and crew scheduling.

Upon docking, astronaut Mike Fincke greeted the station with the words, “Hello, space station!” The crew will spend at least six months aboard the ISS, taking over from the team currently stationed there since March. Those astronauts are expected to return to Earth aboard a separate SpaceX craft as early as Wednesday.

Several members of the newly arrived crew had their original assignments delayed or shifted. Cardman was previously scheduled to fly on a SpaceX mission last year but was replaced to accommodate NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, whose Boeing Starliner test flight extended unexpectedly from one week to over nine months due to technical setbacks. Fincke and Yui had been training for future Boeing missions, but with the CST-100 Starliner now grounded until at least 2026 due to unresolved thruster issues, both were transferred to the SpaceX programme. Platonov, meanwhile, was removed from the Soyuz launch schedule in recent years due to an undisclosed medical issue but has now returned to active flight status.

Their arrival temporarily raises the ISS crew total to 11. As a welcoming gesture, the current occupants greeted the newcomers with cold drinks and a hot meal.

While the 15-hour transit is considered rapid by NASA standards, the Russian space programme retains the record for the fastest crewed trip to the ISS, completing a journey in just three hours using its Soyuz spacecraft.

This latest SpaceX launch demonstrates the increasing reliability of commercial spaceflight partnerships, even as other programmes, such as Boeing's, continue to face operational delays.