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SpaceX Crew Reaches International Space Station in Just 15 Hours

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A SpaceX mission successfully delivered four astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS) on Saturday, completing the journey in just 15 hours—a notably fast trip by

U.S. spaceflight standards. The international crew includes two Americans, one Russian, and one Japanese astronaut, all of whom will serve on the station for at least six months.

The crew launched from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Kennedy Space Center aboard a SpaceX Dragon capsule. Upon arrival, the capsule docked with the orbiting station while passing over the South Pacific. "Hello, space station!" astronaut Mike Fincke said via radio shortly after docking.

The new arrivals are NASA astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut Kimiya Yui, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Platonov. All four had previously been assigned to other missions before being reassigned to this SpaceX flight.

Cardman was initially set to fly on a previous SpaceX mission, but was reassigned to make room for NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who were part of Boeing's delayed Starliner test mission. Originally planned as a one-week trip, Wilmore and Williams have remained at the ISS for over nine months due to technical problems with the Starliner vehicle.

Both Fincke and Yui had been training for future Boeing Starliner flights, but those plans were put on hold after continued issues with the spacecraft's thrusters. The Starliner program is not expected to resume crewed flights until at least 2026. Meanwhile, Platonov had been scheduled for a Russian Soyuz mission but was pulled from the lineup due to an undisclosed illness and later reassigned to this SpaceX flight.

The astronauts were welcomed aboard the ISS with cold drinks and hot food by the current crew. Their arrival brings the station's population to 11 for the time being. SpaceX is expected to return the four astronauts who have been aboard since March as early as Wednesday.

While the 15-hour flight was fast by American standards, Russia still holds the record for the shortest trip to the ISS, completing a mission in just three hours using its Soyuz spacecraft.

This latest SpaceX mission underscores the company's role in maintaining U.S. access to low Earth orbit amid delays in competing commercial programs. With Boeing's Starliner facing continued challenges, NASA continues to rely on SpaceX's proven Crew Dragon vehicle to sustain its ISS operations.