Olympic Torch goes to Space and Back – Space Station Crew 37 lands safely in Kazakhstan

11 November 2013 – Washington, DC, USA – NASA has announced that Expedition 37 crew members Karen Nyberg of NASA, Fyodor Yurchikhin of the Russian Federal Space Agency and Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency have returned to Earth from the International Space Station, landing at 9:49 p.m. EST Sunday, Nov. 10 (8:49 a.m. Kazakhstan time, Nov. 11), after spending 166 days in space.

Inside the Soyuz spacecraft carrying the astronauts was the Olympic torch, which was launched to the station on November 6 and taken on a spacewalk on Saturday November 9 as part of the torch relay. The torch will be used to light the Olympic flame at the Fisht Stadium in Sochi, Russia, marking the start of the 2014 Winter Games in February.

Photo courtesy of NASA, credit Carla Cioffi

Nyberg, Parmitano and Yurchikhin arrived at the station in May, and during their extended stay in space orbited Earth 2,656 times and traveled more than 70 million miles. Parmitano conducted a spacewalk in July, becoming the first Italian to walk in space.

The crew welcomed Orbital Sciences Corp.’s Cygnus cargo spacecraft during its demonstration mission to the station. The trio spent hundreds of hours conducting fundamental research in areas such as human biology, life sciences, physical sciences, Earth sciences, astrophysics and technology research.

Yurchikhin now has logged 537 days in space, spanning four spaceflights. This puts him 12th on the all-time endurance list. Nyberg has accumulated 180 days in space over two missions. This was Parmitano’s first mission.
The International Space Station is a convergence of science, technology and human innovation that demonstrates new technologies and makes research breakthroughs not possible on Earth. The crew performed research into how plants grow which may lead to more efficient crops on Earth and improve understanding of how future crews could grow their own food in space. They tested a new portable gas monitor designed to help analyze the environment inside the space station and continued fuel and combustion experiments undertaken by past crews. The crew also collected data and samples that will be used to help scientists understand ocular health issues of space station crew members and understand changes to body measurements during spaceflight.

The space station has had continuous human occupation since November 2000. In that time it has been visited by more than 200 people and a variety of international and commercial spacecraft. The space station remains the springboard to NASA’s next great leap in exploration, including future missions to an asteroid and Mars.

More about the landing in Kazakhstan can be found at http://www.nasa.gov/content/expedition-37-crew-departure/#.UoD72-LyCB4. For more about the International Space Station, visit: http://www.nasa.gov/station

Created in 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is America’s focal point for research, development and exploration of outer space. For over 50 years, NASA has been leading the world in the development and usage of advanced program and project management. Additional information about NASA can be found at www.nasa.gov.

Source: NASA

Image: courtesy of NASA