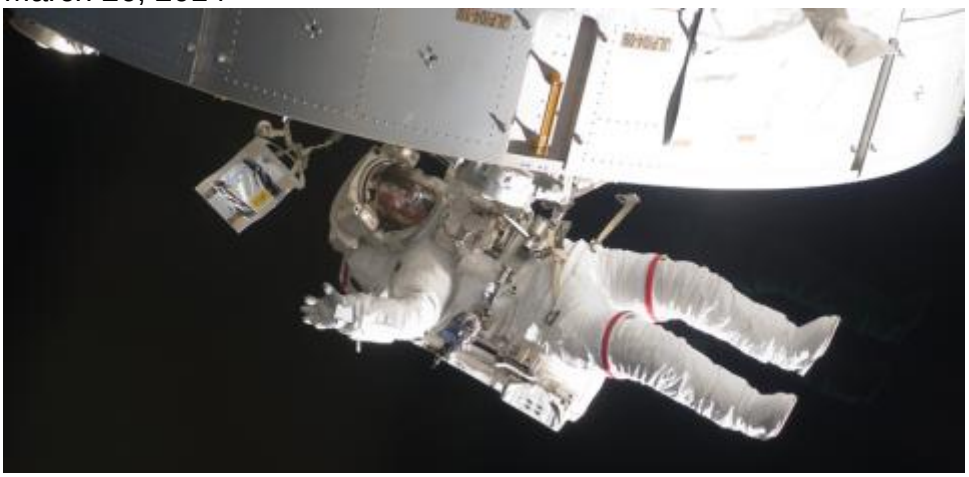
Next stop for CU-Boulder alumnus? Space station

March 26, 2014



When CU-Boulder astronaut-alumnus Steve Swanson thundered into the heavens March 25 headed for the International Space Station, his journeys from Earth to space and back again will be decidedly different from his past missions.

For one, he rode atop a Soyuz rocket blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan in a capsule larger than but reminiscent of those used in NASA?s Apollo days. And his crewmates for the ride up likely were speaking to each other in a different language.

Swanson, who will begin his arrival at ISS as flight commander of Expedition 39 and finish it as space station commander for Expedition 40, will be aboard the orbiting facility for roughly six months. The crew will be involved in dozens of experiments in the low gravity of the ISS, including efforts related to protein crystal growth, capillary blood flow, gravity sensing by plants and muscle and bone loss changes in space.

He previously flew on the STS-17 mission aboard the space shuttle Atlantis to the ISS in June 2007, then flew again on the STS-19 mission aboard Discovery in March 2009. Swanson spacewalked for more than 26 hours during the two missions and is tentatively slated for two more spacewalks during Expedition 39 and Expedition 40.

?We?ve trained extensively and I?m confident I can do all of the tasks assigned to me on the space station,? said Swanson, who considers Steamboat Springs, Colo., his hometown. ?The most difficult part is being away from my family and friends for a long period. I?ll miss them, but at the same time we will be very busy up there, which makes the time pass quickly.? Swanson packed several CU mementos, including a T-shirt, a flag and a small piece of sandstone from the engineering center that has been engraved with a picture of Ralphie the Buffalo and an image of the ISS.

He said one aspect of being an astronaut he enjoyed on his previous missions to the space station was floating in the nearly weightless environment of space. ?It was like being a kid on the best playground in the world.?

Does Swanson, whose two shuttle landings were on a smooth NASA runway in Florida, have any trepidation about drifting by parachute in the Soyuz space capsule back to Earth, eventually banging onto the ground in Kazakhstan? ?I know our landing will be much more wild and exciting than a shuttle landing,? he said. ?It is going to be a very different experience, and I?m looking forward to it.?

Swanson was launched to the ISS along with cosmonauts Alexander Skvortsov and Oleg Artemyev of the Russian Federal Space Agency. ?I?m working on my Russian and they are working on their English,? he said.

As part of his duties on ISS, Swanson will operate hardware developed by BioServe Space Technologies located in CU-Boulder's aerospace engineering department to conduct two experiments on the space station. One is to evaluate known and novel anti-cancer drug therapies in the low gravity of space and the other is to look at host-pathogen interactions to better understand the risk of in-flight infections by space explorers during long-term missions.

?Steve is a Coloradan and a CU alum and I know like many of us, he?s a camping

enthusiast,? said CU-Boulder Scholar in Residence Jim Voss, a former NASA astronaut who received his master?s degree in aerospace engineering from CU-Boulder in 1974.

?After making two shuttle flights where he camped out for a week or so, he?s now going to the International Space Station where he gets to camp out and work for six months,? said Voss, who made five space shuttle flights of his own. ?Steve will be a great ambassador for Colorado and our nation while he is orbiting the Earth."

What does Swanson recall about his time at CU-Boulder? ?I remember waking up and seeing the mountains right there,? he said. ?It was a beautiful thing, and helped me get going every day."

His favorite times on the ISS? ?One of the best things is when you have a moment to yourself where you can just look out the window,? he said. Swanson also said he will spend what little free time he has emailing with family and friends back on Earth, blogging about his space station experiences and hopefully participating in a Google Hangout, sharing messages and photos and video-chatting with CU-Boulder students.

Eighteen CU-Boulder astronaut-affiliates have flown 47 NASA space missions beginning with Scott Carpenter in 1962.

To watch a video of Swanson talking about his NASA experiences and his passion for Colorado?s outdoors visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU53X7O7z7w [2].

Promoted to department's home page:
0
Intro:
Astronaut Steve Swanson packed several CU mementos, including a T-shirt, a flag and a small piece of sandstone from the engineering center that has been engraved with a picture of Ralphie the Buffalo.
Original Story:
News Type:
News [3]
Featured News Home Page Image:
CU Astronaut Alumnus Steve Swanson [4]
Images:
CU Astronaut Alumnus Steve Swanson [5]
Video:
Audience:
Alumni and Friends [6]
Groups audience:
University Relations
Office of the President

Source URL: https://www.cu.edu/office-president/news/next-stop-cu-boulder-alumnus-space-station

Links:
[1] https://www.cu.edu/file/steve-swansonjpg
[2] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU53X7O7z7w
[3] https://www.cu.edu/news/news
[4] https://www.cu.edu/download/file/fid/4043
[5] https://www.cu.edu/download/file/fid/4041
[6] https://www.cu.edu/alumni-and-friends