

## NASA to launch astronauts to space station from US soil for the first time in a decade

Next month, human spaceflight will return to US soil after nearly a decade.

NASA announced Friday that SpaceX will launch astronauts Douglas Hurley and Robert Behnken on a mission to the International Space Station on Wednesday, May 27 at 4:32 p.m. ET.

Liftoff will be from Florida's Kennedy Space Center — marking the first time a rocket will carry astronauts into orbit from the United States since NASA's Space Shuttle program retired in 2011.

It will also be the first crewed mission for SpaceX since its founding 18 years ago.

The United States and Russia are the space station's primary operators, but since 2011, Russia has been the only country capable of transporting astronauts to and from the ISS.

NASA has paid up to \$86 million per seat and about \$55.4 million on average to fly US astronauts aboard Russia's Soyuz spacecraft, according to the space agency's inspector general.

Years ago, NASA asked the private sector to develop a new generation of crew-worthy spacecraft. SpaceX was **allotted** \$2.6 billion and Boeing was awarded \$4.2 billion in 2014, and the space agency initially predicted their vehicles would be ready to fly astronauts by 2017. But development of both spacecraft took years longer than expected.

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The companies were **neck and neck**, but SpaceX emerged as the clear leader after completing a successful test of its Crew Dragon spacecraft's emergency abort system in January.

neck and neck 并驾齐驱

After launching on May 27, Hurley and Behnken will spend as many as 110 days in space, though NASA said the "specific mission duration will be determined once on station based on the readiness of the next commercial crew launch."