

# Brazil's First Astronaut Gets the Traditional Bread and Salt in Space

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A new crew pulled into port at the International Space Station late Friday, March 31, to start a six-month mission. They have brought a rookie, this time, Brazilian first astronaut, Marcos Pontes.

With Expedition 13 and Soyuz Commander Pavel Vinogradov at the controls, the Soyuz TMA-8 spacecraft automatically linked up to the Earth-facing port on the station's Zarya module at 11:19 p.m. EST Friday. The spacecraft were above China near the Russian, Kazakh and Mongolian borders at the time.

Aboard the Soyuz with Vinogradov were NASA Flight Engineer and Science Officer Jeff Williams and Brazilian Space Agency astronaut Marcos Pontes. Pontes will spend eight days on the complex under a commercial agreement with the Russian Federal Space Agency.

After systems checks, hatches between the Soyuz and the station were opened at 12:59 a.m. EST Saturday. Expedition 12 Commander Bill McArthur and Flight Engineer Valery Tokarev, nearing the end of their six-month mission on the station, greeted their colleagues with handshakes and hugs and offered the traditional bread and salt.

Russian, American and Brazilian dignitaries viewed the docking from the Russian Mission Control Center in Korolev, outside Moscow, and congratulated the crews after hatch opening.

The new crew will now transfer cargo from the Soyuz to the station, deactivate the new Soyuz' systems and stow their launch and entry suits.

Pontes will move his custom-made seatliner into the older Soyuz TMA-7 spacecraft that will bring him home, and he will begin several experiments.

The two station crews will continue handover activities throughout the week, including robotics training with the station arm and detailed briefings on scientific experiments.

Vinogradov and Williams will remain on board the station until September.

All five astronauts and cosmonauts will participate in a news conference at 10:55 a.m. EDT Monday. NASA Television will broadcast this event live.

Monday night, McArthur and Williams will "camp out" in the Quest airlock. They will sleep in the airlock, isolated from Tokarev, Vinogradov and Pontes, to test a new procedure that may reduce the preparation time for spacewalks.

The new procedure will have spacewalkers stay in the airlock overnight at a lower air pressure to help purge nitrogen from their bodies to prevent decompression sickness. McArthur and Williams will begin their airlock stay at about 6:20 p.m. EDT Monday and finish at 3:30 a.m. EDT Tuesday.

McArthur, Tokarev and Pontes will leave the station aboard the Soyuz TMA-7 and land April 8.

## Remembering Dumont

Brazilian Marcos Pontes has become his country's first astronaut, blasting off from Earth Thursday morning, March 30, for the International Space Station.

Pontes, along with Russian Pavel Vinogradov and American Jeffrey Williams, took off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. He will spend nine days aboard the space station, returning April 9 with the current Russian - U.S. crew members, who have been in orbit for six months.

The Brazilian Air Force officer will conduct several scientific experiments and make observations of his country's surface.

Pontes is taking his national flag along, as well as items to commemorate the first airplane flight by Alberto Santos Dumont, a Brazilian 100 years ago. Dumont is called Aviation's Father in Brazil.

The Brazilian astronaut, has also brought a Brazilian football shirt into space. According to Pontes, he was doing this in a bid to bring Brazil's soccer national team good luck in the World Cup.

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