

Axiom Article

4 days in, Axiom Space's crew makes history for private space flight at ISS
Axiom-1 is the first all-private mission to the International Space Station.

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SpaceX/Axiom

Over the weekend, the Axiom-1 mission carried [four rich guys](#) and philanthropists, a celebrity-chef menu, and biomedical experiments to the International Space Station (ISS).

On Friday (April 8) at 11:17 a.m. Eastern, [Axiom-1](#) launched atop a reused SpaceX [Falcon 9](#) rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. This flight began the 10-day mission for the first all-private mission for Axiom Space, a company based in Houston near NASA's [Johnson Space Center](#) that seeks to place the first commercial space station into low-Earth orbit sometime this decade.

Everything leading up to the flight went smoothly for the most part. Personnel noticed a slight loss of pressure after the hatch was first sealed, so a ground crew reopened and resealed it about two hours prior to takeoff.

Two minutes and 45 seconds after launch, the pre-flown first stage — the bottom two-thirds of the rocket — separated from the upper stage and successfully navigated back to Earth's surface, landing on a SpaceX [drone ship](#) floating in the Atlantic Ocean.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched on Friday (April 8) shortly before noon local time with the four crewmembers of the Axiom-1 mission.

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Axiom-1's crew were meanwhile "hooting and hollering" during the ride, Axiom-1 pilot and American real-estate investor Larry Connor said during a [video message](#) to SpaceX headquarters the following day. Commander and former NASA Space Shuttle astronaut Michael López-Alegría remained "diplomatic" during the cheers, Connor added.

They rode within a SpaceX Dragon Endeavour crew capsule, which is now on its third mission to the ISS. Once this robotic cocoon reached its targeted orbit about 12 minutes after launch, the crew got comfortable and had their first meals for the mission. The Axiom-1 mission menu includes Iberian ham and chicken paella, according to a video segment that SpaceX aired during its pre-launch broadcast. The food was prepared by the non-profit organization World Central Kitchen, helmed by celebrity chef José Andrés.

A "Caramel the Dog" stuffed animal traveled to space with Axiom-1. This is the mascot for the Montreal Children's Hospital in Canada.

AXIOM SPACE

[Caramel the Dog](#), the mascot for the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation, made an appearance after launch. Astronauts typically use stuffed animals as zero-G indicators, which lets them see whether or not weightlessness has kicked in while remaining safely strapped into their seats. A camera inside Endeavour aired the first microgravity flight of Axiom-1's zero-G indicator. The toy was selected because Mission Specialist and Canadian entrepreneur Mark Pathy collaborates with Canadian health centers as part of his philanthropic work.

The 21-hour trip to the space station suffered a snag at the end. When Endeavor reached the ISS and attempted to dock, the astronauts on the space station [couldn't see the feed](#) from an Endeavour camera that was necessary for the docking procedure. Docking was delayed about 45 minutes as teams figured out a solution, which was eventually reached through support from SpaceX Headquarters and NASA.



The SpaceX Dragon Endeavour carrying the Axiom-1 astronauts approaches the International Space Station on April 9, 2022.

[NASA/FLICKR](#)

At 10:13 a.m. on Saturday (April 9), the Axiom-1 crew successfully docked to the ISS, bringing the orbiting laboratory's population up to 11. The space station was already housing Expedition 67, a mission made up of three NASA astronauts, one European astronaut, and three Roscosmos cosmonauts.

A NASA [blog post](#) published on Monday (April 11) details the science work they will be assisting during their eight days on the space station. The experiments will tackle questions about [genetic markers in cellular aging](#), [changes to brain activity in microgravity](#), and a [DNA editing system](#).

Monday marked Flight Day 4 of Axiom-1.