

'Astroluca' New Commander of the ISS

Roberta Cutillo (October 03, 2019)



Astronaut Luca Parmitano becomes the first Italian and third European to command the International Space Station (ISS), taking over from the Russian Alexei Ovchinin.

Born in 1976 in Paternò, Sicily, Parmitano - known as [Astroluca on Twitter](#) [2], where he posts breathtaking photos from Space - trained in the Italian military and was awarded the Silver Medal for Aeronautical Valour in 2007, before being recruited by the [European Space Agency \(ESA\)](#) [3] in 2009. In 2013 he became the first Italian to carry out extravehicular activity, that is walk in space.

And yesterday, October 2, 2019, he was made the new commander of the [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#) [4], which launched in 1988 and is one of the largest structures built in space over the last 20 years, having received large investments from five space agencies: NASA (United States), ESA (European Union), Roscosmos (Russia), Jaxa (Japan) and CSA (Canada)



The handing over ceremony took place on the station itself, and was live streamed. Parmitano expressed his gratitude towards Alexei Ovchinin, from whom he is taking over, for having successfully lead the mission thus far. He then thanked Italy “because if I am here today it is thanks to the education I received.”

“I can’t wait to get to work,” he continued, “Thanks to all the years of training preparation, I am confident that despite all the tasks we have ahead of us in the coming months, in the end we will look back on today and tell ourselves that our confidence was well placed. I will do my best to be of service and deserving of this honor.”

Today, October 3rd, expedition 61 begins, the second part of the ‘Beyond Mission’, which is set to last until February 2020 and involves, among other things, repairing the [Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer \(AMS\)](#) [5], a particle detector attached to the ISS.

As Commander, Parmitano will take on a crucial and delicate role, being responsible for the security of all six crew members. He is the one in charge of overseeing and coordinating operations on board, including in case of emergency.

The expedition will consist in carrying out a variety of activities, including the Analog-1 experiment, which includes “driving” a rover in the Canary Islands from the ISS. The aim being to test the ability to carry out remote expeditions, which could be used to explore hostile habitats.

This appointment is therefore a great honor and a source of pride, not just for Parmitano, but for the country as a whole, an example of how Italy’s excellencies are present in all sectors, from art and culture to science and innovation.

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Links

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/parmitanocoverjpg>

[2] https://twitter.com/astro_luca?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1179391438775361537&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.repubblica.it%2Fscienze%2F2019%2F10%2F02%2Fnews%2Fluca_parmitano_comandante_della_iss_e_il_primo_italiano-237493650%2F

[3] <http://www.esa.int/ESA>

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Space_Station

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha_Magnetic_Spectrometer