NASA Astronauts Return After 9-Month Delay

March 19, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

What's in Today's Article?

NASA Astronauts Return Latest News

- NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams returned to Earth after a nine-month delay due to issues with Boeing's spacecraft.
- Both the astronauts had traveled to the International Space Station (ISS) in June 2024. They were initially supposed to return within a week, but their spacecraft, Boeing's Starliner, developed issues, making it unsafe

for their return.

Nine Months in Space

- Williams and Wilmore’s 286-day stay is one of the longest but not a record.
- Soviet cosmonaut Valeri Polyakov holds the record for the longest continuous stay in space at 438 days.
- Other astronauts, including Russia’s Oleg Kononenko and US astronaut Peggy Whitson, have spent extensive time in space over multiple missions.

Boeing’s Starliner Test Mission

- Their mission was primarily to test Boeing’s Starliner CST-100, a spacecraft developed under NASA’s Commercial Crew Program to transport astronauts to the ISS.
- The spacecraft encountered technical issues, including a helium leak, even before launch but was allowed to proceed.
- Further problems arose en route to the ISS, preventing its safe return journey.

Delay in Return Arrangements

- NASA had no immediate alternative to bring them back, as missions are planned well in advance.
- The next scheduled return mission was set for February 2025, but with no urgent medical concerns, NASA allowed them to stay aboard the ISS, which can accommodate up to 12 astronauts.

A Mission Marked by Uncertainty

- Their extended stay drew global attention, redefining the idea of being stuck at work.
- While longer space missions have occurred, none had experienced such an unexpected extension and uncertainty regarding their return.

Active Contributions During Extended Stay

- Despite their situation, Wilmore and Williams fully integrated into the ISS crew, conducting experiments, repairing equipment, and even participating in spacewalks.

Williams’ Spacewalking Record

- With 62 hours over nine spacewalks, Williams set a new record for the most time spent spacewalking by a female astronaut.

Leadership Role in Space

- Having prior experience on the ISS, both astronauts adapted quickly.
- Williams took on the role of station commander three months into their stay and held the position until earlier this month.

Scientific Opportunity in Prolonged Stay

- Their extended stay provides valuable data for NASA's research on the effects of long-duration space missions.
- The findings will contribute to studies on muscle and bone loss, brain fluid changes, heart disease risks, and psychological impacts—key concerns for future Moon and deep-space missions.

NASA Astronauts Return FAQs

Q1. Why were NASA astronauts delayed in space?

Ans. They were stranded for nine months due to technical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, delaying their return.

Q2. What was the mission of Boeing's Starliner?

Ans. It was a test mission under NASA's Commercial Crew Program, but it faced technical failures, including a helium leak.

Q3. How long did the astronauts stay on the ISS?

Ans. They stayed for 286 days, one of the longest missions, though not a record-breaking duration in space.

Q4. What contributions did astronauts make during the delay?

Ans. They conducted experiments, equipment repairs, and spacewalks, with Suni Williams setting a new spacewalking record.

Q5. What insights did NASA gain from the extended mission?

Ans. The prolonged stay provided valuable data on muscle loss, brain fluid changes, heart disease risks, and psychological effects of space travel.

Source: IE | HT | Forbes
