

US Female Astronaut to Break Record for Time in Space



By Erik Lief — April 21, 2017



Record-breaking time in space. (photo courtesy: Shutterstock) [1]

If the "Sky's the Limit" for someone whose ambitions know no bounds, what's the limit for someone who lives above the sky?

A curious soul might like to pose that existential question to Peggy Whitson, as her stay in space reaches record-breaking heights.

Or, better yet, maybe President Trump will do it during his upcoming call with the trailblazing NASA astronaut.

On Monday April 24, Whitson will log her 535th day in space, eclipsing the previous cumulative mark set by fellow U.S. astronaut Jeff Williams. To mark the occasion, Mr. Trump will personally congratulate Whitson by phone from the Oval Office.

"The 20-minute call will air live on NASA Television and stream on the agency's website and Facebook page at 10 a.m. EDT," the space agency [announced](#) [2], "and will be made available to schools, museums, and other organizations across the nation and globally."

In addition to being poised to log the most time in space, the 56-year-old scientist, who holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry, is the Commander of the International Space Station's Expedition 51 team. Whitson is currently on her third mission, which began when she arrived at the ISS on November 19.



But Commander Whitson, who appears downright giddy regarding her lengthy stay in space, is in no rush to return to Earth; she has signed on to extend her stay orbiting the planet until September 3. If Whitson returns as scheduled, she'll have lengthened her station visit to 289 consecutive days for this mission, while extending her record-breaking total to 666 career days in space.

"This is great news. I love being up here. Living and working aboard the space station," she said April 5 in a [NASA statement](#) [3], "is where I feel like I make the greatest contribution, so I am constantly trying to squeeze every drop out of my time here. Having three more months to squeeze is just what I would wish for."

If you're interested in listening into Monday's call with the President, here are a few avenues:

- NASA Television -- <http://www.nasa.gov/live> [4]
- Facebook -- <https://www.facebook.com/NASA/> [5]
- YouTube -- <https://youtu.be/UdmHHpAsMVw> [6]

And clearly not satisfied simply to stay indoors, Whitson also holds the record for most accumulated time spacewalking for a female astronaut: 53 hours and 22 minutes.

While as a society we've become relatively blasé about space exploration, as well as the science research taking place in the orbit right above our heads, every now and then it's worth noting how remarkable it really is. And in light of yet another achievement, this time for career space endurance, here are a few congrats for Commander Peggy Whitson.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/04/21/us-female-astronaut-break-record-time-space-11171>

Links

[1] <http://www.shutterstock.com>

[2] <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/president-trump-makes-special-long-distance-call-to-record-breaking-american-astronaut>

[3] <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-astronaut-peggy-whitson-adds-three-months-to-record-breaking-mission>

[4] <http://www.nasa.gov/live>

[5] <https://www.facebook.com/NASA/>

[6] <https://youtu.be/UdmHHpAsMVw>