

READ FOR SPESIFIC INFORMATION

To date, there have been three astronauts of Arab origin who flew into space. Prince Sultan bin Salman Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia flew in the US Space Shuttle in 1985. Two years later, Syrian astronaut Mohammad Faris made a space flight as part of a joint Syrian-Russian mission. Moreover, in 2019 Hazza Ali Abdan Khalfan Al Mansouri of the United Arab Emirates flew in the Soyuz MS-15 spacecraft to the International Space Station.

Al Mansouri's space adventure began on December 6th, 2017 when UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, through his Twitter account, invited young Emiratis to register for the UAE Astronaut Programme through the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre. Al Mansoori was one of two people selected from 4022 candidates, following a series of tests in the UAE and Russia. His military background helped him pass the various tests which he had to go through.

As part of an agreement between Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) and Russian space agency Roscosmos to train Emirati astronauts, Al Mansouri took part in some intensive training at Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia. The aim was to prepare Al Mansouri for the ISS mission.

On April 12th, 2019, MBRSC announced that Al Mansouri would participate in an eight-day mission to the International Space Station (ISS). He was assigned to Soyuz MS-15, alongside Russian commander Oleg Skripochka and American flight engineer Jessica Meir, both of whom would remain aboard the ISS for 204 days as part of Expedition 61/62. Unlike Skripochka and Meir, Al Mansouri would land eight days after launch aboard Soyuz MS-12, alongside Russian commander Aleksey Ovchinin and American flight engineer Nick Hague, who would be returning following a 203-day stay on ISS as part of Expedition 59/60.

Al Mansouri, Skripochka and Meir launched on September 25th, 2019 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, a spaceport in southern Kazakhstan. The trio spent around six hours free flying in space before docking to the Zvezda module on ISS. Al Mansouri's mission occurred during an unusual time when nine people were aboard ISS.

During his unprecedented stay aboard ISS, Al Mansouri conducted different scientific experiments and filmed the first ever tour of the ISS in Arabic. Finally, on October 3rd, 2019, Al Mansouri, Ovchinin and Hague boarded the Soyuz MS-12 spacecraft and undocked from the ISS. That marked the end of Expedition 60 and the official beginning of Expedition 61. The three astronauts spent around five hours free flying in space before de-orbiting and touching down on the Kazakh Steppe.

This text about how the UAE started its journey to explore space. Read the text and answer the following questions.

1- How many Arab astronauts have been to space so far?

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2- Was it easy for Al Mansouri to be selected for the UAE Astronaut programme? Why?

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3- What do countries do to facilitate cooperation in the field of space?

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4- How long was Al Mansouri's mission into space?

5- What is special about Al Mansouri's mission?

6- What achievements did Al Mansouri's mission realize?
