

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

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Sunita L. Williams

(Captain, U.S. Navy, Ret.) NASA Astronaut

Summary:

Sunita (Suni) L. Williams was selected as an astronaut by NASA in 1998 and is a veteran of two space missions, Expeditions 14/15 and 32/33. NASA astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore launched aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft on June 5, 2024 for its first crewed flight, arriving at the space station on June 6. Following the agency's decision to return Starliner uncrewed, the duo is currently living and working aboard the space station as part of the Expedition 71/72 crew and will return home in February 2025 aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft with NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov on NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 mission.

Personal Data:

Born September 19, 1965 in Euclid, Ohio to Dr. Deepak and Bonnie Pandya. Considers Needham, Massachusetts to be her hometown. Suni and her husband Michael enjoy hanging out with their dogs, working out, working on houses, working on cars, working on airplanes, hiking and camping.

Education:

Needham High School, Needham, Massachusetts, 1983. Bachelor of Science in Physical Science, U.S. Naval Academy, 1987. Master of Science in Engineering Management, Florida Institute of Technology, 1995.

Experience:

Williams received her commission as an Ensign in the United States Navy from the United States Naval Academy in May 1987. After a six-month temporary assignment at the Naval Coastal System Command, she received her designation as a Basic Diving Officer and then reported to Naval Aviation Training Command. She was designated a Naval Aviator in July 1989. She then reported to Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 3 for initial H46, Seaknight, training. Upon completion of this training, she was assigned to Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 8 in Norfolk, Virginia, and made overseas deployments to the Mediterranean, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in support of Desert Shield and Operation Provide Comfort. In September 1992, she was the Officer-in-Charge of an H-46 detachment sent to Miami, Florida for Hurricane Andrew Relief Operations onboard USS Sylvania. Williams was selected for United States Naval Test Pilot School and began the course in January 1993. After graduation in December 1993, she was assigned to the Rotary Wing Aircraft Test Directorate as an H-46 Project Officer, and V-22 Chase Pilot in the T-2. While there, she was also assigned as the squadron Safety Officer and flew test flights in the SH-60B/F, UH-1, AH-1W, SH-2, VH-3, H-46, CH-53 and the H-57. In December 1995, she went back to the Naval Test Pilot School as an Instructor in the Rotary Wing Department and the school's Safety Officer where she flew the UH-60, OH-6 and the OH-58. From there, she was assigned to the USS Saipan (LHA-2), Norfolk, Virginia, as the Aircraft Handler and the Assistant Air Boss. Williams was deployed onboard USS Saipan when she was selected for the astronaut program. She has logged more than 3000 flight hours in over 30 different aircraft.

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NASA Experience:

Selected as an astronaut by NASA in June 1998, she reported for training in August 1998. Astronaut Candidate Training included orientation briefings and tours, numerous scientific and technical briefings, intensive instruction in shuttle and International Space Station systems, physiological training and ground school to prepare for T-38 flight training, as well as learning water and wilderness survival techniques. Following a period of training and evaluation, Williams worked in Moscow with the Russian Space Agency on the Russian contribution to the space station and with the first Expedition Crew. Following the return of Expedition 1, Williams worked within the Robotics branch on the station's Robotic Arm and the follow-on Special Purpose Dexterous Manipulator. As a NEEMO2 crew member, she lived underwater in the Aquarius habitat for 9 days. After her first flight, she served as Deputy Chief of the Astronaut Office. She then supported a long-duration mission as Flight Engineer for Expedition 32 and International Space Station Commander for Expedition 33. Williams has spent a total of 322 days in space over the course of her two missions. With 50 hours and 40 minutes, she is second on the list of total cumulative spacewalk time by a female astronaut. NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore launched aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft on June 5, 2024 for its first crewed flight, arriving at the space station on June 6. Following the agency's decision to return Starliner uncrewed, the duo is currently living and working aboard the space station as part of the Expedition 71/72 crew and will return home in February 2025 aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft with NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov on NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 mission.

Spaceflight Experience:

Expedition 14/15 (December 9, 2006 to June 22, 2007). Williams launched with the crew of STS-116 on December 9, 2006, docking with the International Space Station on December 11, 2006. As a member of the Expedition 14 crew, Williams served as Flight Engineer. While onboard, she established a world record for females with four spacewalks totaling 29 hours and 17 minutes. (Astronaut Peggy Whitson subsequently broke the record in 2008 with a total of five spacewalks). Williams concluded her tour of duty as a member of the Expedition 15 crew returning to Earth with the STS-117 crew to land at Edwards Air Force Base, California on June 22, 2007.

Expedition 32/33 (July 14 to November 18, 2012). Williams launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, along with Russian Soyuz commander Yuri Malenchenko and Flight Engineer Akihiko Hoshide of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, on July 14, 2012. They were welcomed on the International Space Station on July 17, 2012, by NASA Flight Engineer Joe Acaba and Russian cosmonauts, Expedition 32 commander Gennady Padalka and Flight Engineer Sergei Revin. Williams spent four months conducting research and exploration aboard the orbiting laboratory. She landed in Kazakhstan on November 18, 2012, after spending 127 days in space. During their Expedition, Williams and Hoshide performed three spacewalks to replace a component that relays power from the space station's solar arrays to its systems, and repair an ammonia leak on a station radiator. With 50 hours and 40 minutes, Williams once again held the record for total cumulative spacewalk time by a female astronaut (has since been overtaken by Peggy Whitson with 10 spacewalks). Williams has spent a total of 322 days in space.

Awards/Honors:

Awarded DSSM (2), Legion of Merit, Awarded Navy Commendation Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal and various other service awards.

Organizations:

Society of Experimental Test Pilots, Society of Flight Test Engineers, American Helicopter Association.

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Pronunciation: SUN-ee-tah WILL-yums