

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

March 2025



Raja Chari

NASA Astronaut and U.S. Air Force Brigadier General

Summary:

Raja Chari was selected by NASA to join the 2017 Astronaut Candidate Class. He reported for duty in August 2017. The Iowa native graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in Astronautical Engineering and Engineering Science. He continued on to earn a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. He served as commander of the NASA's SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station, which launched on November 10, 2021. He served on the space station as part of Expedition 66 and 67 before returning to Earth May 6, 2022, completing the agency's third long-duration commercial crew mission. The international crew of four spent 177 days in orbit.

Personal Data:

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Chari was raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa. He is married to Holly Schaffter Chari, also a Cedar Falls native, and the couple has three children.

Education:

Graduated from Columbus High School in Waterloo, Iowa. Earned a bachelor's degree in Astronautical Engineering and Engineering Science from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado. Earned a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Graduated from the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School in Patuxent River, Maryland. Graduated from U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Experience:

Chari is a Brigadier General in the U.S. Air Force. At the time of his selection in June 2017, he served as the Commander of the 461st Flight Test Squadron and the Director of the F-35 Integrated Test Force. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in the F-35, F-15, F-16, and F-18 including F-15E combat missions in Operation Iraqi Freedom and deployments in support of the Korean peninsula.

NASA Experience:

Chari reported for duty in August 2017 and completed two years of training as an Astronaut Candidate. He then served as the Director of the Joint Test Team for NASA's Commercial Crew Program. He served as commander of the NASA SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the space station, which launched on November 10, 2021. He served as a flight engineer aboard the space station for 177 days in orbit. During his time on the space station, he performed two spacewalks and helped in capturing and releasing three SpaceX Dragon spacecraft and two Cygnus cargo vehicles.

Following his spaceflight, Chari became Assistant to the Chief for Exploration at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. In this role, Chari is responsible for leading astronaut development and testing for the Human Landing System – the lunar lander under NASA's Artemis campaign. This includes integration the design and testing with NASA's Orion spacecraft, lunar spacesuits, and the Gateway lunar outpost.

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Awards/Honors:

Awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Korean Defense Service Medal and the Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal. Named distinguished graduate from the US Air Force Academy, Undergraduate Pilot Training, and the F-15E Formal Training Unit. Awarded the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, and the NASA Space Exploration Medal.