

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

August 2026



E. Michael Fincke

(Colonel, U.S. Air Force, Ret.) NASA Astronaut

Summary:

E. Michael Fincke was selected as an astronaut by NASA in 1996. The Pennsylvania native is the veteran of three spaceflights: Expedition 9 in 2004, Expedition 18 in 2009, and STS-134 in 2011. He flew to the space station for the fourth time on August 1, 2025, with the launch of NASA's SpaceX Crew-11 mission where he served as a pilot. While aboard the space station, Fincke served as an Expedition 73/74 flight engineer and commander. NASA's SpaceX Crew-11 mission safely splashed down on January 15, 2026 in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego, concluding a more than five-month mission aboard the International Space Station.

For Expedition 9, Fincke served as Science Officer and Flight Engineer during his six-month stay aboard the International Space Station. While there, he performed four spacewalks. For Expedition 18, Fincke served as space station commander, where he and his crew prepared the station for future six-person crews. For STS-134, he served as Mission Specialist and completed three spacewalks.

Col. Fincke has logged 549 days in space, with nine spacewalks totaling 48 hours and 37 minutes of spacewalking time. He is unique in that six of those spacewalks were in the Russian Orlan spacesuit. Fincke is certified as a Soyuz co-pilot/flight engineer, a member of the Space Shuttle flight deck crew, and pilot for both the Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft.

Fincke retired from the agency on August 12, 2026 after 30 years of service.

Personal Data:

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Fincke considers Emsworth, Pennsylvania, to be his hometown. He is married to the former Renita Saikia of Houston, Texas. They have three children. In addition to time with his family, Col. Fincke enjoys travel, geology, astronomy, learning new languages and reading. He is conversant in Japanese and Russian. His parents, Edward and Alma Fincke, reside in Emsworth, Pennsylvania. Renita's parents, Rupesh and Probha Saikia, formerly of Assam, India, reside in Houston, Texas.

Education:

Graduated from Sewickley Academy, Sewickley, Pennsylvania, in 1985. He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on an Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship and graduated in 1989 with a bachelor of science degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics as well as a bachelor of science degree in Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences. This was followed by a master of science degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Stanford University in 1990. He was awarded an Associate of Science degree in Earth Sciences (geology) from El Camino College in Torrance, California, in 1993, and a second master of science degree in Physical Sciences (planetary geology) from the University of Houston, Clear Lake in 2001.

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



E. Michael Fincke

Experience:

Col. Fincke graduated from MIT in 1989 and immediately attended a summer exchange program with the Moscow Aviation Institute in the former Soviet Union where he studied cosmonautics. Upon graduation from Stanford University in 1990, he entered the United States Air Force where he was reassigned as a Space Systems Engineer and a Space Test Engineer at Los Angeles Air Force Base after the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training program. As a Flight Test Engineer at Edwards and Eglin Air Force Bases, he flew in F-16 and F-15 aircraft. In January 1996, he reported to the Gifu Test Center, Gifu Air Base, Japan, where he was the United States Flight Test Liaison to the Japanese/United States XF-2 fighter program. Col. Fincke has logged more than 2,000 flight hours in over 30 different aircraft types.

NASA Experience:

Selected by NASA in April 1996, Col. Fincke completed two years of training and evaluation. He has served in multiple key roles, including International Space Station capsule communicator (CAPCOM), Crew Procedures Team Lead, and member of the Crew Test Support Team in Russia. He served as backup crewmember for Expeditions 4, 6, 13, and 16 and is qualified as a left-seat flight engineer for the Soyuz TM/TMA spacecraft. His extreme environment training includes NEEMO 2 (2002, underwater) and CAVES 2012 (European Space Agency, underground).

For over a decade, Fincke has been integral to NASA's Commercial Crew Program. As the Astronaut Office Chief of the Commercial Crew Branch in 2014, he participated in the original Commercial Crew Transportation Capability (CCtCap) contracts award.

Following his extensive work with NASA's Commercial Crew Program developing both the SpaceX Crew Dragon and Boeing CST-100 Starliner spacecraft, Fincke played a crucial role in Boeing's Crew Flight Test (CFT) program. He served as backup pilot for the CFT mission and prime pilot for the Starliner-1 mission, contributing significantly to Starliner's development through his work in the Avionics and Software Integration Lab (ASIL), focusing on flight software refinement, systems integration, and human-spaceflight interfaces.

In January 2019, he was assigned as Joint Ops Commander for Boeing's Crew Flight Test mission, serving on the prime crew until June 2022, when he was designated as backup pilot for the revised two-person CFT mission.

Spaceflight Experience:

Expedition 9 (April 18 to October 23, 2004). Launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome aboard Soyuz TMA-4, Col. Fincke served as NASA Science Officer and Flight Engineer. During his six-month stay, he maintained station systems and performed four spacewalks. The mission concluded with a safe landing in Kazakhstan.

Expedition 18 (October 12, 2008 to April 8, 2009). Launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome aboard Soyuz TMA-13. As Commander, Fincke led his three-person crew in preparing the station for future six-person crews and hosted space shuttle crews of STS-126 and STS-119. The mission concluded with a safe landing back in Kazakhstan.

STS-134 (May 16 to June 1, 2011). The final flight of Space Shuttle Endeavour. Fincke served as Mission Specialist 1 on the flight deck, spacewalker, and robotic arm operator. The crew delivered the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) to the International Space Station.

Expedition 73/74 (August 1, 2025 to January 15, 2026). Launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center aboard a SpaceX Dragon spacecraft atop a Falcon 9 rocket as part of NASA's SpaceX Crew-11 mission. Fincke served as flight engineer for Expedition 73 and commander for Expedition 74 before handing over space station command to Roscosmos cosmonaut Sergey Kud-Sverchikov.

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



E. Michael Fincke

Col. Fincke has accumulated 549 days in orbit, placing him fourth on the all-time list for NASA astronauts. He has also completed nine spacewalks totaling 48 hours and 37 minutes of EVA time. Throughout his career, Fincke has remained at the forefront of testing and developing human-rated spacecraft, leveraging his engineering, flight test, and astronaut experience to contribute to the next era of space exploration.

Awards/Honors:

Col. Fincke has received numerous awards, including three NASA Distinguished Service Medals, the highest honor bestowed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He was awarded his first two for his long-duration missions aboard the International Space Station, and his most recent in May 2025 in recognition of his five years of service on the Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test crew and his exceptional contributions to human spaceflight development and flight test operations. His additional NASA recognitions include three NASA Spaceflight Medals and the first International Space Station Leadership Award. His military decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and multiple Meritorious Service Medals. He is a Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Air Force ROTC, Squadron Officer School, and U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School programs, and he received the Col. Ray Jones Award as the Top Flight Test Engineer/Flight Test Navigator in Test Pilot School Class 93B.

Pronunciation:

E. MY-kull FEEN-k