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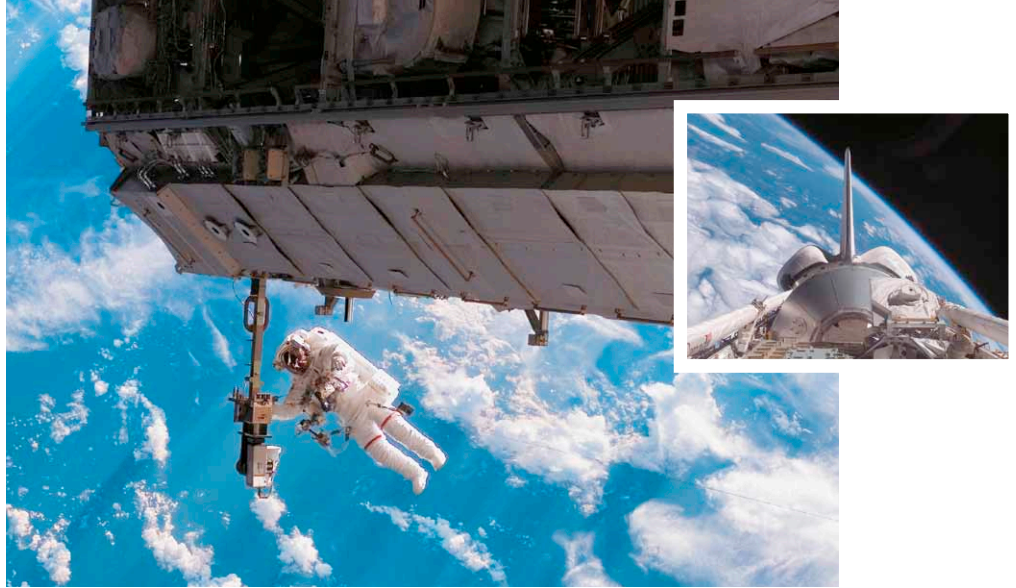
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Reaching for the Stars

Space exploration is one of the few remaining fields in which the curious nature of man can be satisfied nowadays. 55 years ago, on 4 October 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first satellite “Sputnik” triggering a worldwide fascination with space. The space race between the US and the Soviet Union had begun. One step led to another. In 1961 Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was the first human being to orbit the earth and in 1969 American astronauts were the first to set foot on the moon. It was a sensation celebrated all over the world. Today the international space station ISS is in fixed orbit and scientists are preparing for a journey to Mars. What once was a tough battle between two scientifically competing political systems has long since led to close international cooperation. Europe and Germany, as part of the European Space Agency ESA, are comparably successful in space and pursue a number of influential programs themselves. What was science fiction yesterday may become reality tomorrow. Nowhere else is the pioneering spirit of a new era and adventure so much at home as in space exploration.

01 The Rocket Men of Huntsville – The German Contribution to the Conquest of Space

US space exploration began in Peenemünde on the German island of Usedom in the Baltic. Wernher von Braun and his team began work on the V2 rocket there in 1936. At the end of the Second World War, the US brought the men to Huntsville, Alabama, where they continued work that would eventually lead to the first moonlanding in 1969. This film uses archive material and interviews with the German scientists involved to shed some light on this critical period of German-American cooperation.

04 The Return of the Space Shuttle

Following the pause after two space shuttle disasters NASA has continued its shuttle program in an upgraded version. The program is scheduled to last until 2010 and primarily focuses on the completion of the ISS space station. We feature the ground-breaking development of the space craft that can be launched into space time and time again.

05 The “Mars Express” Space Mission

The “Mars Express” mission is the most challenging project in European space research. For the first time European scientists will be able to collect data on Mars themselves. Ever since the Orbiter space probe took position above Mars, the HRSC or High-Resolution Stereo Camera developed in Berlin transmits images of the red planet’s surface to mission control in Darmstadt. This film features the development of the mission and presents its latest scientific results.

06 Mars in the Andes – A NASA Mission to Bolivia

Was there life on Mars? Planetary geologist researcher Nathalie Cabrol and her team of 21 colleagues went on a NASA funded expedition to the High Andes. The environment there resembles the red planet’s surface 3.5 billion years ago. A dangerous expedition. NASA hopes to find clues in the search for extraterrestrial life on other planets. Why does mankind want to explore Mars? What could be the benefit of such a mission?