

## TWILIGHT OF THE SHUTTLE

With vapor trails swirling behind it in the predawn darkness, Space Shuttle *Atlantis* lands at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla., July 21, marking the end of NASA's 30-year shuttle program. Thousands gathered near the landing strip to witness the historic event, while millions more watched on TV. *Atlantis* landed at 5:57 a.m. "I saw grown men and grown women crying today—tears of joy to be sure," Mike Leinbach, shuttle flight director, told reporters. It was the 135th mission for the space shuttle fleet, which flew 542 million miles (870 million kilometers) and circled Earth 21,152 times since the first flight of *Columbia* in 1981. The five shuttles carried 355 people from 16 countries and, altogether, spent nearly four years in space. Boeing and its heritage companies built the space shuttle orbiters and supported operations. The shuttles now are heading to museums, with *Atlantis* to be placed on public display at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex.

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