

Name _____ Date _____

The International Space Station

The International Space Station is the largest space project and the biggest engineering venture ever undertaken. It is a long-term research laboratory for space exploration and it may be the starting point for future manned trips into outer space. The United States, Russia, Japan, Canada, Brazil and 11 other countries in the European Union are involved in the project.

The station is in orbit about 250 miles above the earth. It circles the earth about once every 92 minutes. Almost 85% of the earth can be seen from it.

The station's first module or section, was put into orbit in 1998. The first crew was an American and two Russians and they arrived on November 2, 2000. A crew of at least two has been there ever since. Many others, including one tourist, visit when Space shuttles bring replacement crew members or supplies and equipment.

In 2003, the station had six modules, including living space for the crew. It measured 240 feet wide by 170 feet long by 90 feet high. Several more laboratory and service modules are to be added by 2010. More than 30 Space Shuttle missions will be needed to carry these from earth.

When completed, the station will be 356 feet wide and 290 feet long. Its electrical power will be produced by almost an acre of solar panels. These will be room for seven crew members and several scientific experiments.

Building the station has taken more time than expected, mainly because the project has been far more expensive than was first estimated and there have been problems with Space Shuttle equipment. In July 2004, the United States said it would make a special effort to enlarge the station enough to house four crew members and would arrange for the launch of additional modules, such as the laboratory module that has been built by Japan.