

Press Release

Say hello – wave goodbye to BepiColombo

[@BepiColombo](#) [@ESA_Bepi](#) [@esascience](#) [@JAXA_MMO](#) [#Airbus](#) [#Mercury](#)

03 April 2020 - The Airbus built BepiColombo mission will make a fly-by past Earth on 10th April 2020 as it continues on its epic journey to Mercury.

The joint European Space Agency and Japanese Space Agency spacecraft will swing past Earth at about 13,000 km away, closer than navigation satellites (GPS, Galileo). It will be BepiColombo's final glimpse of Earth before it continues on its seven year, 8.5 billion kilometre journey to the Solar System's innermost, smallest and least explored planet, Mercury. The last time the spacecraft saw Earth was 18 months ago in October 2018, when it was launched on an Ariane 5.

BepiColombo is not due to arrive at Mercury until 05th December 2025, but to get there safely and at the right speed to be captured by Mercury's gravity, it must do nine flybys of the inner planets, one past Earth, two at Venus and six flybys at Mercury. After arrival, the spacecraft will capture data for a year with the possibility of extending the mission.

BepiColombo will collect measurements to study the composition, geophysics, atmosphere, magnetosphere and history of Mercury as well as testing Einstein's theory of general relativity. The 16 scientific instruments will also provide insights into the characteristics of Mercury's magnetic field and how it interacts with the solar wind.

Philippe Pham, Head of Earth Observation, Navigation and Science said: "This flyby marks a great achievement and major milestone for Airbus. Teams across five countries worked together to successfully develop and launch the spacecraft on a complex mission to Mercury."

The journey will total some 8.5 billion km, completing 18 orbits around the Sun before entering the spacecraft's operational orbit and beginning scientific exploration of the planet Mercury.

* * *

About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2019 it generated revenues of € 70 billion and employed a workforce of around 135,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as one of the world's leading space companies. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

Media contact

Jeremy CLOSE

jeremy.close@airbus.com

+44 (0)7766 536 572

This and other press releases and high resolution photos are available on: [AirbusMedia](#)