

BMW Group

Corporate and Governmental Affairs

Media Information
27 April 2010

ISS crew explore BMW universe. Astronauts touch down in BMW Welt. Driver Training with M cars.

Munich. ESA astronaut and ISS Commander Frank De Winne of Belgium paid a visit to the BMW Group in Munich along with his two colleagues Robert Thirsk (Canada) and Roman Romanenko (Russia). The astronauts, normally accustomed to navigating the cosmos in a spaceship, yesterday had an opportunity to learn about the design, innovations and sheer driving pleasure of BMW cars.

At BMW Welt, the tech-savvy ISS crew were particularly intrigued by the exhibition on mobility issues of the future and fuel-saving measures in the current BMW range. "As an astronaut I'm always interested in cutting-edge and future-proof solutions that get me where I want to go both personally and professionally. I can see the same zeal here as well," said De Winne.

The subsequent driving experience lined up for the astronauts revolved around safety, control and driving fun. To start with the BMW Driver Training instructors took them through various exercises to prepare them for the driving experience with models from BMW M GmbH. The astronauts were able to apply their newly acquired knowledge directly to a selection of models in the product range, from the M3 and M6 all the way to the X5 and X6 M. At the end of the training session Frank De Winne was positively surprised: "It was fascinating to see with what precision a car responds when you drive it properly. Like an aircraft, it immediately obeys the pilot's every command. For me it means that if I control my car properly, I'm safer out on the road."

Frank De Winne embarked on his debut flight to the International Space Station in 2002, making him the second Belgian astronaut in space. In October 2009 De Winne was appointed Commander of the ISS for the duration of Expedition 21, the first European to occupy this post.

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Page 2

On 1 December 2009, De Winne successfully returned to Earth. Two new European ESA missions to the ISS are planned for 2010.

Robert Thirsk was assigned to the ISS Expedition 20 as on-board engineer for the International Space Station. On 27 May 2009 he took off for the ISS on the Soyuz TMA-15, the first Canadian ever to fly in a Soyuz spacecraft. He eventually touched down in the Soyuz TMA-15 in Kazakhstan on 1 December 2009, having spent a total of more than 185 days aboard the ISS.

Roman Romanenko is a Russian cosmonaut. He was Commander of the Soyuz TMA-15 spaceship and on-board engineer in the International Space Station (ISS). He set out on 27 May 2009 with Frank De Winne and Robert Thirsk also on board. The docking of the Soyuz TMA-15 on the ISS marked the start of the ISS Expedition 20. On 1 December 2009 Romanenko also returned to Earth along with his two colleagues.

BMW Driver Training – expertise since 1977

As far back as 1977, BMW was one of the first car manufacturers to launch a driver safety training programme. The aim was – and remains – to give customers an opportunity to get to know their car better, sharpen their awareness, and enhance their appreciation of the car's technology as well as of potential hazards in day-to-day driving.

For further information on BMW Group Driver Training please go to www.bmw.com/drivertraining

BMW M GmbH

BMW M GmbH is a 100 per cent subsidiary of BMW AG. With its products and services in the four business areas of BMW M Automobiles, BMW Individual, M Sports Packages and Options and BMW Group Driving Experience, it is geared towards customers with particularly high aspirations in terms of the performance, exclusivity and individual style of their vehicle. Based in Munich, the company was founded in 1972 as BMW Motorsport GmbH. Since then, the letter M has become synonymous all over the world for success in motor racing and for the fascination of high-performance sports cars which can be used for everyday driving.

The production of BMW M automobiles is integrated in the manufacturing processes of the BMW plants. BMW M GmbH has the status of an independent automobile manufacturer.



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Page 3

The BMW Group

The BMW Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the world with its BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce brands. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 24 production facilities in 13 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

The BMW Group achieved a global sales volume of approximately 1.29 million automobiles and over 87,000 motorcycles for the 2009 financial year. The pre-tax profit for 2009 was euro 413 million, revenues totalled euro 50.68 billion. At 31 December 2009, the company employed a global workforce of approximately 96,000 associates.

The success of the BMW Group has always been built on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy. As a result of its efforts, the BMW Group has been ranked industry leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes for the last five years.

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