

By: Gabriel Cache, Science News Editor

## [ESA Space Truck Launches Flawlessly](#)

*Jules Verne will reach the International Space Station on April 3rd*

Yet another successful liftoff for the European Space Agency. The unmanned Ariane 5 rocket carrying the Automated Transfer Vehicle Jules Verne launched yesterday from the Kourou spaceport in French Guiana at 1:03 a.m. Local time, 11:03 p.m. ET. The Jules Verne ATV is the first of its kind launched into space to replace the Russian built Progress freighters, used to deliver supplies to the International Space Station. According to the ESA, the ATV was originally scheduled for launch on 22nd of February, but it was delayed for the 8th of March, Saturday at 05:23 CET. The ESA gave no notification for the delay so far. Last week, during a routine check, the ESA engineers discovered a potential problem with the grounding straps located on the launcher-module separation system, and it was delayed 24 hours for launch. Upon further investigation, the problem was quickly resolved and the spacecraft was given the "go ahead" for launch on Wednesday, 6 of March. As you can clearly see, the ATV 'Jules Verne', which was named after the 19th century French science fiction writer, is the first of its kind, the most powerful and first re-supply ship to execute a navigation program and docking maneuver without human assistance. Jean-Yves Le Gall, president of the Arianespace launch company stated: "The first part of the Ariane 5 mission has reached an end". Once it reaches Earth's orbit, the ATV will be on its own. It will fly over the regions of Europe, southeast of Asia and Australia before entering the docking stage. It will begin the approach stage immediately, so that on April 3rd the Jules Verne ATV would dock on the Russian built Service Module. Only the ATV weighs about 9 tons, but it is carrying about 21 tons of supplies for the crew of the ISS, amongst which: oxygen for the artificial atmosphere, food, water, experiments and other essential tools and equipment. Arianespace has scheduled another eight future re-supply missions involving the ATV, Jules Verne being only the first of them.