The final launch to Mars for the next two years looked pretty epic

reader comments

15 with 14 posters participating

Share this story

- Mars 2020 Perseverance rover is on its way.
- The mighty “Dominator” Atlas V 541 goes supersonic with our newest Mars rover.
- The stunning backdrop is courtesy of the launch taking place just a couple hours after sunrise.
- Four solid-rocket motors and a single RD-180 engine produce a lot of smoke and fire.
- So much smoke.
- And so much fire.
- Here’s a view of the launch in infrared.
- The Atlas V rocket has launched NASA’s previous four missions to Mars.
- This image provides a gorgeous view of the rocket launching from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.
- Love the pillar of smoke.
- Four solids give the Atlas V rocket a kick off the pad.
- Love this image.
- A good vantage point shows the rocket lifting off over the Atlantic Ocean.
- Nice vapor cone!

- Goodbye, *Percy*!

On Thursday morning, an Atlas V rocket launched NASA's latest rover, *Perseverance*, to Mars.

This marked the third of three launches to the red planet in 2020—following the UAE's Hope and China's Tianwen-1 missions—and it came near the closing of this year's month-long "window" to the red planet. During such a window, which comes around about every 26 months, spacecraft can follow an elliptical orbit such that they will arrive at the location in space where Mars will be seven months from now—making the shortest possible journey to the red planet.

Even the smallest missions to Mars need a powerful rocket to launch, and this is especially true for a rover that will be the largest object NASA has ever tried to land on the red planet's surface. *Perseverance* weighs a little more than a metric ton.

For this mission, NASA chose an Atlas V rocket with four solid rocket boosters. The rocket built by United Launch Alliance took flight under clear skies from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, and, well, we'll stop writing because the photos of this epic launch speak for themselves. We're not sure we've ever seen a more breathtaking Atlas V launch.

Listing image by NASA

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1695722