



INVESTING IN SPACE

SpaceX launches a 'rideshare' mission carrying 143 spacecraft, a record for a single launch

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KEY POINTS

- Elon Musk's SpaceX launched another rocket into the record books on Sunday, with the first mission of its "SmallSat Rideshare" program called Transporter-1.
- The Falcon 9 rocket carried 143 spacecraft into orbit — a new global record for the most spacecraft launched at once.
- The company's SmallSat Rideshare launches give smaller satellites — as small as the size of a mailbox — an option to orbit for as little as \$1 million for 200 kilograms



The Falcon 9 rocket stands on the launchpad in Florida ahead of liftoff for the Transporter-1 mission.

SpaceX

SpaceX launched another rocket into the record books on Sunday with the first mission of its "rideshare" program carrying dozens of small satellites into space.

The Falcon 9 rocket, which took off from Florida's Cape Canaveral, carried 143 spacecraft into orbit — a new global record for the most spacecraft launched at once, and surpassing the mark of 104 set by an Indian PSLV rocket in February 2017.

Called Transporter-1, the SpaceX mission was the first for the company's SmallSat Rideshare program.

While SpaceX advertises a launch on a Falcon 9 dedicated to a single satellite for \$62 million, the company's SmallSat Rideshare launches give smaller satellites — as small as the size of a mailbox — an option to orbit for as little as \$1 million for 200 kilograms.

Such rideshare missions have become increasingly common in the space industry, with [international competitors like Arianespace's Vega](#) looking to claim a share of the growing marketplace of small satellites.

Rideshare missions offer a different option for low-cost satellites looking for a ride to orbit, with [smaller rockets like Rocket Lab's Electron offering a more tailored approach](#).

"SpaceX is providing a competitive rideshare option, in large part leveraging its Starlink launches," Bryce Space and Technology senior analyst Phil Smith told CNBC.

The SpaceX service is not quite on demand, Smith said, but companies can pay a premium to launch according to their schedule, rather than the schedule of the primary customer.

"A fairly reliable 'bus route' is available," Smith said of SpaceX, "whereas I suppose one might compare companies like Rocket Lab and Virgin Orbit as on-call taxis that get your satellite where you want it ASAP."

[Elon Musk's](#) company launched 133 satellites for a broad variety of government and private customers, as well as 10 of its own Starlink satellites.

SpaceX's customers on board Transporter-1 include: Planet Labs, Exolaunch, D-Orbit, Kepler Communications, Spaceflight Inc, Nanoracks, NASA and Capella Space, as well as iQPS, Loft Orbital, Spire Global, ICEYE, HawkEye 360, Astrocast, and the University of South Florida Institute of Applied Engineering.

Notably, the 10 Starlink satellites aboard this mission will be the first in the constellation to deploy to a polar orbit, as [the company continues to expand public access to its satellite internet network](#). Those 10 satellites were added after Momentus took its first Vigoride mission off the Transporter-1 launch earlier this month. Momentus cited additional time needed for regulatory approval as the cause of the change.

<https://www.cnn.com/amp/2021/01/24/spacex-launches-rideshare-mission-with-143-spacecraft.html>