Roman Space Telescope Launches: SpaceX’s 13th Falcon Heavy, 13th Success

2026-08-30T12:15:03.374647Z

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NASA’s Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope launched successfully on August 30, 2026, aboard a SpaceX Falcon Heavy from Pad 39A at Kennedy Space Center. Liftoff was at 7:26am EDT.

Falcon Heavy’s record: 13 missions, 13 successes. Both side boosters flew back and landed at Landing Zones 2 and 40. The center core was expended, as planned for this trajectory.

What Roman is: The most powerful wide-field space telescope ever launched. A 300-megapixel infrared camera with a mirror the same size as Hubble’s but less than a quarter of the weight - because the mirror came from hardware originally built for U.S. intelligence satellites before being transferred to NASA.

Why Roman matters: Each image covers at least 100 times more sky than Hubble. In five years of operations, Roman should image more than 50 times as much sky as Hubble did in its first 30 years. It will study dark energy, dark matter, and map billions of galaxies. All survey data will be publicly released after processing.

The mission survived: Trump administration targeted Roman for outright cancellation four separate times and a fifth proposal would have crippled its funding. Congress protected the mission each time. Roman launched nine months ahead of the original schedule and on budget.

Where it’s going: L2, the second Sun-Earth Lagrange point, the same gravitational parking spot as the James Webb Space Telescope, roughly one million miles from Earth.

What’s aboard: 1,350,144 names submitted by the public, traveling with the telescope toward the edge of the observable universe.

SpaceX context: This was the 14th primary NASA mission launched by SpaceX and the 4th on Falcon Heavy. SpaceX’s Launch Services Program has now managed 109 primary NASA missions total.

Source: https://science.nasa.gov/blogs/roman/ (https://science.nasa.gov/blogs/roman/)

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