

Humanity's first flight to Sun in July: NASA

Final countdown: A file photo of engineers examining the Parker Solar Probe. | Photo Credit: [JIM WATSON](#)

NASA's Parker Solar Probe — humanity's first mission to the Sun — is undergoing final preparations for its launch scheduled for July 31.

The spacecraft will continue testing, and eventually undergo final assembly and mating to the third stage of the Delta IV Heavy launch vehicle. It will be launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

After launch, it will orbit directly through the solar atmosphere — the corona — closer to the surface than any human-made object has ever gone.

While facing brutal heat and radiation, the mission will reveal fundamental science behind what drives the solar wind, the constant outpouring of material from the Sun that shapes planetary atmospheres and affects space weather near Earth.

For the next several months, the spacecraft will undergo comprehensive testing. Just prior to being fuelled, one of the most critical elements of the spacecraft, the thermal protection system (TPS), or heat shield, will be installed.

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