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What's next for the Inspiration4 capsule?

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The Crew Dragon Resilience capsule might next undertake a very different kind of tourist flight, if a tweet from last November holds true.

SpaceX was still weeks away from announcing the Inspiration4 mission, when Resilience transported four NASA astronauts to the International Space Station in the capsule's first flight. Former NASA astronaut Michael López-Alegría tweeted that "this very SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule" would ferry him and three other civilians to ISS and back in January 2022. That 10-day mission, Ax-1, is being arranged by Axiom Space of Texas, where López-Alegría is vice president of business development.

Now, neither SpaceX nor Axiom will confirm whether that's still the plan. Resilience and the Inspiration4 passengers splashed down off the coast of Florida on Sept. 18 after three days in orbit.

We do know that the capsule might have more life left. SpaceX has said Dragons can be flown "at least" five times, and the Inspiration4 flight from Cape Canaveral, Florida, was the second flight for Resilience. ★

► This SpaceX photo shows the Inspiration4 capsule after it was hoisted by crane onto the "Dragon nest," the circular platform on the deck of the recovery ship off Florida. The four space flyers were helped out of the capsule moments earlier.

