A structure is rising beside the ocean to meet the dawn of a new age in space exploration.

Construction workers and launch complex engineers are moving and stacking the first tiers of a crew access tower that will eventually reach about 200 feet at Space Launch Complex 41.

The tower is designed to allow astronauts and ground support personnel to reach the CST-100 Starliner spacecraft as it stands atop a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket prior to launch.

The tower is the first of its kind for the spaceport since the fixed service structures built for the space shuttles.

It will take many weeks to finish the stacking, which is taking place between launches of the Atlas V on other missions.

Boeing will use the tower in 2017 for its unpiloted and crew flight tests of the Starliner system.
In the coming years, it will host teams of ground support personnel and NASA astronauts heading to the International Space Station. And perhaps eventually paying customers taking a ride into orbit.