

Tereshkova, Valentina Encyclopedia Article

Tereshkova, Valentina

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Tereshkova, Valentina

In 1963 Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to fly into space.

Russian Cosmonaut and Politician 1937-

The Soviet Union not only launched the first human into space (Yuri Gagarin in 1961) but in June 1963 it also sent the first woman, Valentina Tereshkova. It would be another twenty years before Sally Ride became the first American woman in space. Tereshkova joined a club of amateur parachutists in 1961, shortly before interviewing with the Soviet space program. Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev had suggested sending a woman into space before the United States. A lack of female airplane pilots made parachutists attractive candidates for the Soviet space program, and Tereshkova and three other women parachutists and a female pilot were selected to train as cosmonauts in 1962. Tereshkova was the only woman in the group who made it into space.

On June 16, 1963, Tereshkova launched aboard Vostok 6. She orbited forty-eight times over 70 hours and 50 minutes before returning to Earth. Tereshkova ejected from the capsule about 610 meters (20,000 feet) above the ground and descended in a parachute. She married fellow cosmonaut Andrian Nikolayev in 1963, and the next year their daughter Yelena became the first child of parents who had both been in space. Tereshkova later became a member of the Supreme Soviet, the former Soviet Union's national parliament.

Thrusters **See External Tank (Volume 3); Solid Rocket Boosters (Volume 3).**

See Also

Cosmonauts (Volume 3);; History of Humans in Space (Volume 3);; Ride, Sally (Volume 3);; Vostok (Volume 3);; Women in Space (Volume 3).

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