



Yuri Gagarin

Yuri Gagarin was born on 9th March 1934 in a village called Klushino, near Gzhatsk (renamed Gagarin in 1968) in the Smolensk region of Russia. He lived with his father, Alexei Ivanovich; mother, Anna Timofeyana; brothers, Valentin and Boris; and a sister, Zoya.

Gagarin grew up on a collective farm and was poorly educated during the German occupation of his village in the Second World War. On 9th March 1943, The Red Army liberated Klushino and Gagarin was able to recommence his studies. With the help of Yelena Alexandronova who volunteered to run the school – and Lev Mikhailovich Bespavlov, an ex-airman who joined the school to teach maths and physics, he managed to catch up with his education.

Gagarin went on to train as a foundry man at Lyubertsy Steel Plant in Moscow (which had a training facility on site) and then on to the Saratov Industrial Technical School, whilst there he joined the Saratov Flying Club and learned to fly the YAK-18 and MiG-15 in his spare time.

He graduated in 1955 from Saratov Industrial Technical School with excellent marks but decided to continue his career in the air force. Gagarin was drafted into the Soviet Military School in Orenburg in 1956. Not long after arriving, he met Valentina Goryachev at one of the bases dance nights. They married on 27th October 1957 - just 3 weeks after the successful launch of the World's first satellite, Sputnik-1. Gagarin graduated with honours and a few weeks later and was posted to the Nikel Airbase, in Murmansk, near the Arctic Circle.

In April 1959, they had their first child, Yelena and by January 1960 he had been accepted for Cosmonaut training in Star Town (Star City) in Moscow. In March 1961, their second daughter, Galina was born and the day after bringing her home from the hospital, Yuri Gagarin and Gherman Titov were taken to the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Tyruatam for the final part of their cosmonaut training.

On 12th April 1961 Major Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin became the first human in space and the first person to orbit the Earth. The Vostok-1 spacecraft blasted off from the Baikonur launch site at 06:07 UTC* (09:07am Moscow time).

Gagarin's flight lasted 108 minutes, this including 89 minutes in space. He completed one orbit of the Earth, travelling at 27,400 kilometres per hour. At the highest point, Gagarin was 327km (203miles) above sea level.



Four months after Gagarin's Flight, Gherman Titov became the second man in space. He admitted to ejecting himself from Vostok-2. This sparked an investigation which determined that Gagarin had also ejected from Vostok-1 and parachuted to the ground. The Russian authorities did not release this information immediately, so for many years it was believed that Gagarin landed inside his capsule.

In light of this information, the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) delegates decided to rework the parameters of human spaceflight to recognize that "the great technological accomplishment of spaceflight was the launch, orbiting and safe return of the human", not the manner in which he or she landed. Therefore, Gagarin remains the First Man in Space and became a hero of the Soviet Union.

Gagarin's achievement also made him a worldwide celebrity and his first World tour to promote the Soviet achievement included visits to: Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Finland, The United Kingdom (London and Manchester), Iceland, Cuba, Brazil, Canada and Hungary.

In the September of 1961, Yuri Gagarin joined the Air force Engineering Academy (VVIA). During the remainder of his life, Gagarin worked on several space missions and trained other cosmonauts. They continued to achieve world firsts in space travel, paving the way for future generations. In 1965 Gagarin re-entered mission training as a back-up cosmonaut, enrolled in the Institute of Aeronautical Engineering and in 1967 began training for the first Soyuz flight.



Gagarin, unfortunately, did not get to travel into space again, nor did he live to see a man land on the moon in 1969.

Colonel Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin died on 27th March 1968. He was on a routine test flight in a Mig-15 UTI when it crashed killing him and his co-pilot Colonel Vladimir Serëgin. Their funeral took place on 30th March and their remains are buried in the Kremlin wall in Moscow.