

# Yuri Gagarin

**Yuri Gagarin was the first human to journey into space!**

## Who Was He and What Did He Do?

Yuri Gagarin was born on 9th March 1934, in Russia. He trained as an engineer and then joined the Soviet Air Force in 1955. In 1957, he graduated from the cadet school, became a fighter pilot and married his wife, Valentia. Yuri was then shortlisted for the Vostok 1 programme in 1960 along with 19 other candidates.



## What Were His Big Achievements?

At just 27 years old, on 12th April 1961 he became the first human to enter space and orbit the Earth. The first spaceship to do this, Vostok 1, took 108 minutes and Yuri was not allowed to operate the controls because weightlessness had not been tested on humans before. He circled the Earth at a speed of 27,400 kilometres per hour. Yuri landed by parachute after being ejected from the spacecraft and touched down safely near the Volga River.

## Did You Know?

Yuri said, "Poyekhali!" when he lifted off, which means 'Let's go!'

## What Is He Remembered For?

After his accomplishment, Yuri Gagarin became a national hero and worldwide celebrity. He earned many awards and honours, including being named a 'Hero of the Soviet Union'. Yuri toured the world, visiting many countries, including the UK in 1961. This massive achievement meant that the Soviet Union had beaten America in the space race. He sadly died on 27th March 1968, when he was just 34, in a two-seater MiG-15 fighter jet crash during training with his instructor. There are statues of Yuri Gagarin in Moscow, Russia, in London, UK and in Kyrgyzstan.

