

Valentina Tereshkova

Valentina Tereshkova is the first woman to have travelled in space. On 16th June 1963, she flew the spacecraft Vostok 6 around Earth. In total, she **orbited** the planet 48 times, which took her almost three days.

Valentina was selected from more than 400 others and her mission was to find out how women reacted to **spaceflight**. On her journey, she took some incredible photographs of Earth from space. Some of the pictures showed how the world was suffering from the effects of global warming. They were then used to help improve scientists' understanding of it.



Early Life

Valentina's parents came from Belarus, a country in eastern Europe, but Valentina was born in central Russia. When Valentina was two years old, her father left to fight in the Second World War. This left her mother to raise Valentina in a village called Maslennikovo. Valentina left school at just 16 when she discovered her love of skydiving.

In 1959, Valentina made her first jump and it was her skill as a skydiver that eventually led to her being picked as the first space woman.

Being Picked

Being such a skilful skydiver and having a real interest in politics, Valentina was seen as the ideal person to become a **cosmonaut**. Five women were picked to become cosmonauts but only one of them was needed for the spaceflight. It was up to Valentina to prove that she was the one they wanted.

Training

The training was really hard and the candidates had to take many physical and mental tests. This included months of weightless flights, long periods on their own and lessons about rockets and space travel. They also completed 120 parachute jumps and trained in jet fighter planes. Training ended with exams and, in 1962, Valentina passed with two of the other candidates.

Valentina was chosen as the Vostok 6 pilot a month before the flight and, on 16th June 1963, the spacecraft was ready for launch. After a two-hour countdown, Valentina was launched skywards, becoming the first ever woman in space.

Quick Facts



Known for: First woman in space

Nationality: Russian

Date of birth: 6th March 1937

Place of birth: Bolshoye Maslennikovo, Central Russia

Occupation: Cosmonaut, politician, engineer **Spacecraft:** Vostok 6

Space time: 2 days, 22 hrs and 50 mins

The Flight

Being stuck in such a small area, Valentina felt cramped and sick for most of the flight but managed three days in space before returning to Earth.

Legacy

Out of the five female candidates that trained to become a cosmonaut, only Valentina made it in to space. 19 years later, in 1982, Svetlana Savitskaya joined Valentina in the record books when she became the second woman in space aboard Soyuz T-7.

During her life, Valentina married twice. Her first husband was also a cosmonaut and, in 1964, they had a daughter, Elena. Elena was the first person in the world whose parents had both been to space!

As well as being a cosmonaut, Valentina was an engineer and politician during her working life. Now retired, she remains an inspiration to men and women throughout the world.

Awards

- Hero of the Soviet Union
- Order 'For Merit to the Fatherland'
- Order of Lenin
- Order of the October Revolution
- Order of Alexander Nevsky
- Order of Honour
- Order of Friendship



Glossary

cosmonaut: A Russian astronaut.

orbited: Having circled the Earth.

spaceflight: A journey through space.

Questions

1. Valentina Tereshkova is the first woman to have... Tick one.

flown for almost three days.

had parents from Belarus.

travelled in space.

been born in central Russia.

2. What was Valentina's mission?

3. Why were Valentina's photos of Earth useful?

4. What do you think it was like for Valentina's mother raising her daughter? Give reasons in your answer.

5. Look at the section, **Being Picked**. Summarise this section in your own words.

6. How long **exactly** did Valentina spend on the space flight?

Questions

7. Number these events 1 – 5 to show the order that they happen in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- Valentina left school at just 16.
- Svetlana Savitskaya became the second woman in space. Valentina had
- her daughter, Elena.
- 1 Valentina was selected from more than 400 others.
- Valentina trained in jet fighter planes.

8. If you were to meet Valentina Tereshkova, what would you like to ask or say to her? Give two answers.
