1942



In 1942 the German V2 was the first rocket to reach 100km from the Earth's surface (the boundary of space)

The rocket was designed by Wernher Von Braun, who later worked for NASA as the creator of the rockets that went to the moon.

1947



In 1947, the first animals were launched into space. Fruit flies were used to find out about the effects of space travel on animals. The fruit flies were chosen because they are more similar to humans than you might think!

The flies travelled with a supply of corn to eat during the flight.

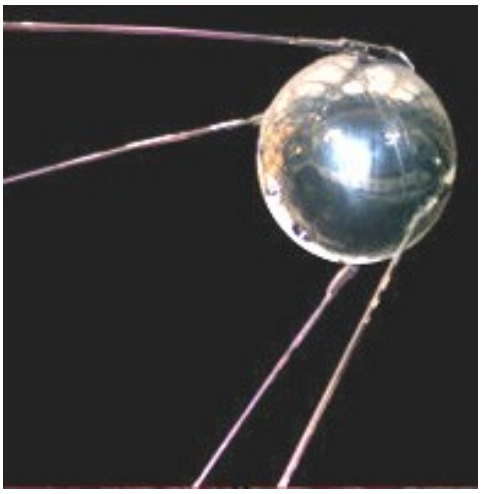
1949



Albert II, was the first monkey to go into space. He was a Rhesus monkey, this monkey originally comes from Asia.

Albert went into space on **14th June 1949** in a specially adapted American V2 rocket, that flew to a height of 83 miles from Earth.

1957



On 4th October 1957, Russia launched the first satellite into space; Sputnik 1, and the space age had begun!

Sputnik was the first satellite in orbit around the Earth. Today there are over 500 working satellites in space.

Sputnik means "Satellite" in Russian.

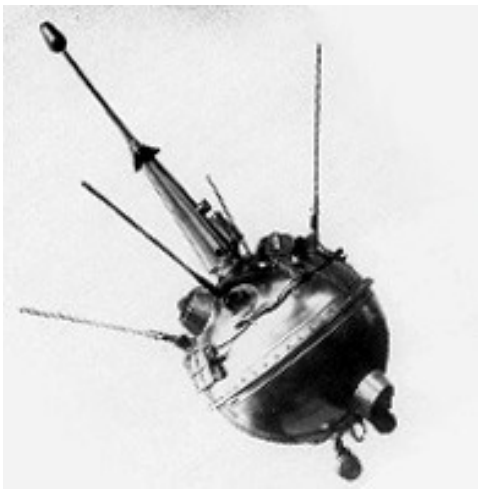
1957



In November 1957, the Russian space dog Laika became the first amimal to orbit the Earth.

Laika travelled in a spacecraft known as Sputnik 2. Laika means "Barker" in Russian, and her mission helped scientist understand whether people could survive in space..

1959



By 1959 both America and Russian scientists were in a race to get a spacecraft to the Moon; the Russians made it first.

Space-probe Luna 2 crash-landed into the moon at a speed that would kill an astronaut if one had been travelling in it!

It would be ten more years until a human visited the moon's surface.

1961



On 12th April 1961, Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space. Gagarin's spacecraft Vostok 1, completed one orbit of the Earth, and landed about two hours after it launched.

Gagarin had to bail out and land using his parachute, because the Vostok 1 had been designed to crash land!

1963



The first woman in space was Valentina Tereshkova she was a Russian cosmonaut.

After her 1963 mission, Valentina became an important member of the Russian Government, and has been awarded many honours and prizes for her achievements. A crater on the Moon has been named after her!

1966



In 1963 US President John F Kennedy promised the world that the US would land men on the moon before 1970. Before risking peoples lives, NASA sent a robot spaceship, to make sure they could land safely.

It was called Surveyor 1, and it made the second soft landing on the moon on **30th May 1966**, a few months after Russian probe Luna 9 had landed successfully.

1966



Once it had landed on the moon, the robotic Surveyor 1 started taking photographs of the moon's surface, which it transmitted back to very excited scientists in America and around the world.

The scientists used this important information to work out how they might be able to safely land people on the moon.

1969



On 20th July 1969, Neil Armstrong, and then Buzz Aldrin took "***one small step***" and became the first men on the moon. The first words said on the moon were " the Eagle has landed". Their spaceship Apollo 11 worked perfectly, flying them 250,000 miles to the moon, and brought them all the way back safely to Earth.

Buzz was a nickname given as a child - his real name was Edwin.

1970



Two days into its journey to the moon, on **13th April 1970,** Apollo 13 suffered an explosion caused by a wiring fault. Using only what was on board NASA scientist and the astronauts on board improvised to repair and bring the broken spaceship back home.

The mission was a successful failure; although the crew never got to walk on the moon at least they made it back home alive!

1971

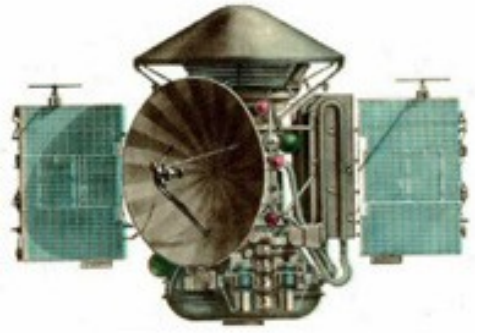


From 1971 American astronauts on the fourth, fifth and sixth Apollo missions enjoyed use of a moon car to explore the moon. Known as the Lunar Rover, it was electric powered, and had a top speed of 8mph.

It was designed and developed in only 17 months by Boeing, the aeroplane company famous for making the Jumbo Jet.

1973

In 1973, Russian space probe Mars 2 explored Mars, the fourth planet of the solar system.



The probe was made of two parts. One part stayed in orbit for a year, sending pictures of Mars back to Earth. The other part was going to land and explore the surface of Mars, but it was destroyed when its parachute failed to open.

1981



Until **12th April 1981** all spacecraft was designed to be used only once. The Space Shuttle, was designed to be reused for up to 100 visits into space, in an attempt to make space travel less expensive.

With five very powerful rocket motors, it could fly at more than 17,000 miles per hour. Six have been built.

1986



On 28th January 1986, tragedy struck. The Space Shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after launch, because of a fuel system failure. Sadly all seven astronauts on board were killed, and shuttles were then grounded for nearly three years.

This shocking accident reminded the world of the dangers involved in space travel, as well as the incredible bravery of the astronauts.

1986



The MIR space station was built in sections, each piece launched by a rocket and then joined together in orbit. Construction began in 1986 and the last piece was fitted fifteen years later!

MIR was the first consistently inhabited long term space station. MIR was destroyed in 2001 when it burned up as it crashed back to Earth.

1991



In 1989, Helen Sharman entered a competition to become the first British astronaut in space. After 18 months of intensive training, Helen was part of a Russian mission to the MIR space station.

She spent eight days in space. During this time she conducted scientific experiments. Before becoming an astronaut she worked for the sweet company that makes Mars bars!

2000



In 2000 the first permanent crew moved into the International Space Station (ISS), where crews of astronauts have been living ever since.

The ISS is a huge space station for research and space exploration that began construction in 1986 and it is hoped it will be completed during 2012.

2001



On 28th April 2001 American millionaire Dennis Tito became the first space tourist when he paid around 20 million dollars for a ride in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft.

Dennis spent a week in orbit, most of the time visiting the International Space Station. To go on this trip he had to train for 900 hours just to be a passenger!

2004



On 21st June 2004, Space Ship One made the first ever privately funded manned space flight. This space plane was built by a private aviation firm to win the 10 million dollar Ansari X Prize.

A new airline, Virgin Galactic has been set up to offer private tourists flights into space, using a new version of this space plane. Tickets are available for flights which will start in around 2012.

2020



In January 2004, President George Bush (US) announced that NASA would begin missions to the moon again by 2020, when work on a permanent moon-base will begin. The next thing will be a manned mission to visit Mars, that could last for 2 years.

Many of the astronauts that will go on these missions are children right now.!

Will one of them be you?