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On This Day: Yury Gagarin Orbits Earth on Vostok 1

On April 12, 1961 Yury Gagarin became the first man in space.

April 12, 2019

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On this day in 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yury Gagarin became the first human to travel into outer space.

On board the "Vostok 1," Gagarin successfully orbited earth in his space capsule. During the journey, which lasted 1 hour and 48 minutes, Gagarin said little. The only known statement recorded from him: "Flight is proceeding normally. I am well." Then 27 years old, on his return to earth Gagarin was awarded the Order of Lenin and given the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Known for his unassuming disposition and quiet charm, Gagarin became famous instantly

and has become a name known throughout the world. A year later on April 9, 1962, the day of his flight was officially established as Cosmonautics Day, celebrating an event that would represent the start of a new era in Soviet — and world — space exploration.

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