

THE WORLD'S OLDEST SPACE STATION



The Baikonur Cosmodrome also called Tyuratam, is the world's first and largest operational space launch facility. It is located in the desert steppe of Kazakhstan, about 200 kilometres east of the Aral Sea, north of the Syr Darya river, near Tyuratam railway station, at 90 meters above sea level. It is leased by the Kazakh government to Russia (currently until 2050) and is managed jointly by the Russian Federal Space Agency and the Russian Space Forces. The shape of the area leased is an ellipse, measuring 90 kilometres (56 mi) east-west by 85 kilometres (53 mi) north-south, with the cosmodrome at the centre. It was originally built by the Soviet Union in the late 1950s as the base of operations for its space program. Under the current Russian space program Baikonur remains a busy space port, with numerous commercial, military and scientific missions being launched annually. Currently, all manned Russian spaceflights are launched from Baikonur.



HISTORY

The Soviet government issued the decree about Scientific-Research Test Range No. 5 (NIIP-5; Russian: Nauchno-Issledovatel'skii Ispytatel'nyi Poligon N.5) on 12 February 1955. It was actually founded on 2 June 1955, originally a test center for the world's first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), [5] the R-7 Semyorka. NIIP-5 was soon expanded to include launch facilities for space flights. The site was selected by a commission led by Gen. Vasily Voznyuk, influenced by Sergey Korolyov, the Chief Designer of the R-7 ICBM, and soon the man behind the Soviet space program. It had to be surrounded by plains, as the radio control system of the rocket required (at the time) receiving uninterrupted signals from ground stations hundreds kilometres away. [6] Additionally, the missile trajectory had to be away from populated areas. Taking these two constraints into consideration, the commission chose Tyuratam, a village in the heart of the Kazakh Steppe. The expense of constructing the launch facilities and the several hundred kilometres of new road and train lines made the Cosmodrome one of the most costly infrastructure projects the Soviets undertook. A supporting town was built around the facility to provide housing, schools and support infrastructure for workers. It was raised to city status in 1966 and named Leninsk (presently Baikonur).

In 4th October 1957, the world's first satellite was launched from Baikonur. It was called Sputnik 1.

A month later, on 3rd November 1957 Sputnik was launched. Inside the satellite was the first dog to travel into space. Its name was Laika.



On 12th April, Yuri Gagarin became the first man in the world to travel into space in Vostok 1. It took him 108 minutes to travel around the Earth in his spacecraft.



The first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova, was also launched into space from Baikonur on 16th June 1963.



On 2nd October 1991, Toktar Aubakirov become the first Kazakh to travel into space on the spacecraft TM-13. aubakirov spent 8 days in space. While he was there, he did experiements foe Kazakhstan.



The world first space tourist was Dennis Tito. He went into space from Baikonur on 6th May 2001. with him was the second Kazakh in Space, Talgat Musabaev. Musabaev travelled into space three times. He first space flight was to the space station Mir on 1st July 1994. the mission lasted for 125 days, 22 hours and 53 minutes! On his second space flight, Musabaev was commander of the mission. This expedition lasted for 207 days, 12 hours and 42 minutes.



Kazakhstan first satellite, called Kazsat, was launched on 18th June 2006.

Baikonur is very important in the history of space travel, and Kazakhstan hopes it will continue to be important in the future, too.

