

## Russia Unveils Monument to First Dog in Space

**Stray dog Laika paved the way for space exploration when she manned the world's first space flight.**

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Russian officials have unveiled a monument to Laika, a stray dog who wandered into history books 50 years ago when she manned the world's first space flight, paving the way for an era of human space exploration.

The monument, which features Laika standing on top of a rocket, is near a Moscow military research facility that was involved in the Nov. 3, 1957, flight.

Soviet scientists used dogs for early space flights because they didn't think a living being could survive a launch. To the scientists' surprise, Laika survived the launch and lived for several hours in orbit.

"Laika was quiet and charming," mission scientist Dr. Vladimir Yazdovsky wrote in a book about Soviet space medicine. Yazdovsky said he brought Laika home to play with his children days before the launch. "I wanted to do something nice for her: She had so little time left to live."

Several other dogs died in subsequent failed launches before the successful space flight — and safe return to Earth — of dogs Belka and Strelka in August 1960.

The Soviet Union put the world's first human, astronaut Yuri Gagarin, into space on April 12, 1961.