

# All aboard for Soviet space capsule sale

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Sotheby's in New York will auction the spherical Vostok 3KA-2, a 1961 Soviet space capsule seen here on display at Sotheby's in New York, on 12 April to mark the 50th anniversary of the first manned space flight by Soviet pilot Yury Gagarin.

For sale: vehicle with extremely high mileage, serious damage, and a price tag in the millions. That's right -- a historic Soviet space ship.

Sotheby's in New York will auction the spherical Vostok 3KA-2 [Space Capsule](#) on 12 April, the 50th anniversary of the first manned [space](#)

flight by Soviet pilot Yury Gagarin.

The pre-sale estimate is for \$2 million to \$10 million.

The battered craft has serious historical credentials as the model used for the final dummy run before Gagarin left on his mission.

"Not only are there no other examples outside of [Russia](#) of the world's first spacecraft, this capsule was pivotal in space history as providing the green light for Gagarin's spectacular achievement," Sotheby's vice chairman David Redden said.

"It's an extraordinary object that makes (the history) real and also totally terrifying."

Ahead of the auction the craft can be viewed in the Manhattan lobby of Sotheby's.

Surprisingly small, considering its epic journey, the capsule resembles a very large boulder.

It was sent into space on March 25, 1961, carrying a life-sized human mannequin and a small dog named Zvezdochka, meaning "Little Star." The capsule completed one orbit, then reentered the atmosphere and landed safely under parachute.



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A Russian scientist who witnessed the landing described the wreckage resembling "an enormous animal driven too hard, lying in a narrow snow-covered gully, the snow melting around the charred and still hot body of the unit."

But successful recovery of the mannequin and the shaken, but otherwise unharmed dog, meant Gagarin's flight could go ahead.

The bottom half is blackened from scorching while reentering the Earth's atmosphere. The top half of the outside shell, made of [synthetic materials](#), is bronze-colored and bears a huge dent. Inside, the cramped space is littered with remains of old wires and the ejector seat.

"These were very primitive," Redden said. "There was a good shot that whoever went into space was not coming back."

Redden said wealthy individuals are expected to bid for the craft, now owned by an unidentified American. Ideally, the buyer would then loan this relic of the heroic era in space flight to a museum, he said.

"It's a big thing to take home."

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