

Soviet space capsule sold for \$2.9M at NYC auction

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This undated file photo provided by Sotheby's in New York shows the Vostok 3KA-2 space capsule, flown with the cosmonaut-mannequin Ivan Ivanovich on March 25, 1961, as the final test mission prior to Yuri Gagarin's first manned space flight. The capsule, the only Vostok space capsule outside of Russia and the only one in private hands, is scheduled to be offered at auction by Sotheby's on April 12, 2011, the 50th anniversary of Gagarin's flight. (AP Photo/Sotheby's,

File)

(AP) -- A 1961 Soviet space capsule that carried a cosmonaut mannequin and a live dog into space was sold at Sotheby's on Tuesday for \$2.9 million, a spokesman for the auction house said.

The buyer of the [Vostok](#) 3KA-2 was Russian businessman Evgeny Yurchenko, said David Redden, of Sotheby's. The total price included the buyer's premium, he said.

Redden said Yurchenko planned to take the capsule back to his home country.

"I hope that Vostok will take its rightful place in one of the nation's museums devoted to the history of the formation of the Russian space program," Yurchenko said in a statement issued by Sotheby's.

The capsule, which is made of [aluminum alloy](#) and measures just over 7 feet in diameter, was used on a test run for the spacecraft that carried the first man into outer space. Its pre-sale estimate was \$2 million to \$10 million, and it was offered on the 50th anniversary of the [manned mission](#). It was classified "secret" until 1986.

Though it was scorched during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, it brought a mutt named Zvezdochka, or Little Star, safely back from space. The life-size space-suited mannequin was nicknamed Ivan Ivanovich.

Sotheby's said the anonymous seller bought it privately from the Russians years ago.

The capsule went into space weeks before the manned flight of Vostok 3KA-3, which carried cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

Redden said that getting the Vostok 3KA-2 back to Russia might be complicated because it is classified by the U.S. State Department as a space object. "Interestingly enough, it requires some special licenses," he said.

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