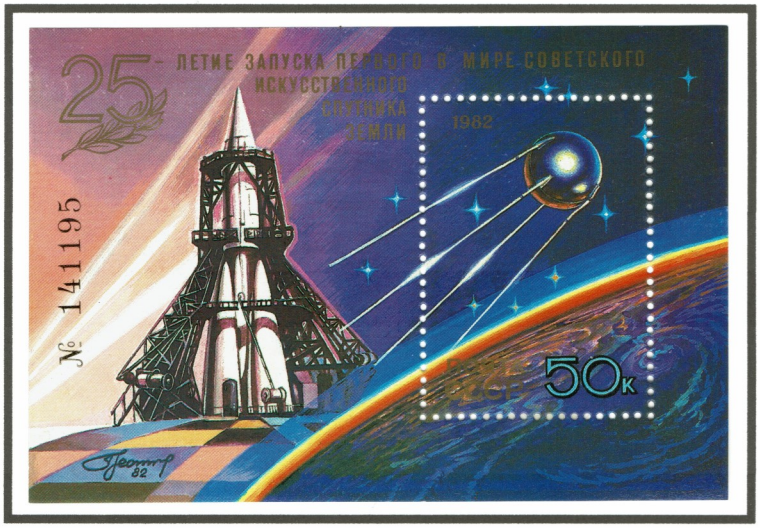
The First into Space

On October 4, 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite and, in doing so, starting the great age of space exploration.

Immediately after Sputnik's launch, Romania issued this 3 stamp se-tenant set - "Launch of the First Soviet Earth Satellite". All of the Eastern Block countries issued stamps to celebrate the event.

Radio signals from Sputnik continued for 21 days until her transmitter batteries ran out. She burned up on January 4, 1958 while re-entering Earth's atmosphere having completed 1440 orbits and travelling some 70 million km (43 million mi).



This beautiful stamp was issued on 11/5/57 by the Soviet Union with a print run of 5,000,000.

A 1987 Soviet Union offering, part of a 3 stamp series, celebrating Sputnik's 30th Anniversary.

November 3, 1957 - aboard Sputnik 2, Laika the dog became the first animal to orbit the Earth. The project aimed to prove that a living passenger could survive being launched into orbit and paved the way for human spaceflight.

Sputnik 2 was a 4-meter (13 foot) high cone-shaped capsule. It contained compartments for radios, telemetry and scientific instruments as well as a separate sealed cabin (the ball on the right side of the capsule as seen in this stamp) containing the dog Laika.

August 19, 1960—Russian Space-dogs Belka and Strelka spent a day in space aboard Sputnik 5 before safely returning to Earth. They were accompanied by a grey rabbit, 42 mice, two rats, flies and several plants and fungi. All passengers survived and became the first Earth-born creatures to go into orbit and return alive.