

A Balloon Mission to the Edge of Space



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Flight 1

10 APRIL 2011: KiwiSpace Foundation has successfully launched a helium balloon above the Waikato and recovered its payload of cameras, tracking equipment and breathtaking images from the edge of space.

While the MetService launches meteorological balloons regularly, KiwiSpace believes this is the first balloon launched with the goal of capturing images of New Zealand and space from very high altitudes.

We chose to launch the balloon on Sunday to honour the golden anniversary of human spaceflight and to celebrate the official incorporation of the Foundation. Fifty years ago on April 12, 1961, Russian Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space when he boarded spacecraft Vostok-1 and blasted off at 6:07am UTC (6:07pm NZST). He made a single orbit of the Earth and touched down again safely in the rural USSR 108 minutes later.

The balloon was launched at 8:48am on the morning of Sunday 10th April, climbed to 51,180 feet (15.6km), just beyond the 1950's definition of space, before popping and landing just east of Pirongia, near Hamilton. Recovery teams reached the payload at 11:12am and were delighted to find it intact and still taking pictures.

The part of the mission that left the ground cost around \$3000 - balloons, payload electronics, etc - and was funded by members and sponsors. Many, many more hours were spent by the project team building components, planning and developing weather forecast models and contacts. On-ground tracking equipment was provided by the project team and by the amateur radio community.

Flight 1 Parameters

- Maximum recorded altitude: 51,580 feet [AMSL](#)
- Ground distance travelled: 46 km
- Ascent Time: Approx. 1 hour, 7 minutes
- Descent Time: Approx 43 minutes
- Descent speed at ground: 1082 feet/minute

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