



U.S. SPACE MISSIONS

FRIENDSHIP 7



John Glenn in his Friendship 7 pressure suit.

On February 20, 1962 an Atlas rocket carried the Friendship 7 space capsule into orbit around the Earth. Astronaut John Glenn piloted the capsule. He was the first American to orbit the Earth.

The launch of Friendship 7 was originally scheduled for January 16, 1962, but the flight was delayed several times. Some of the delays were because of weather conditions; others were because of technical problems. Finally Friendship 7 lifted off from the launch pad at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

The flight took almost five hours. Friendship 7 made three orbits around the Earth. The U.S. set up tracking stations around the world to allow contact with Glenn during the flight.

During the mission there were problems with the automatic control system. Glenn had to manually fly the spacecraft many times during the flight.

Glenn watched the sun rise and set several times. He also completed many of the tasks assigned for the mission.

After the third orbit, Friendship 7 reentered the Earth's atmosphere. The capsule had parachutes that would slow it down for the landing in the ocean. Glenn landed safely in the water and a U.S. Navy helicopter picked up Friendship 7 and delivered it to a waiting aircraft carrier.

Friendship 7 was a part of the Mercury space program. Friendship 7 was the third of six Mercury space flights piloted by an astronaut.



Launch of Friendship 7



Astronaut John Glenn entering the Friendship 7 capsule.

Q&A

How many times did Friendship 7 orbit the Earth?

3

Who was the pilot on Friendship 7?

John Glenn

What year was Friendship 7 launched?

1962

What slowed down the capsule when it reentered the Earth's atmosphere?

parachutes