

Rocket Garden

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At NASA, it's often said that we stand on the shoulders of giants. Nowhere is that more apparent than in The Rocket Garden. Behind every rocket you see are great men and women – engineers and astronauts, designers and thinkers – who turned dreams into history. It is here you find the first rocket to break free from gravity, see the Mercury-Redstone, which shot to space with a lone man perched atop its nose and see the vehicles that launched satellites into orbit and man into space. And just like a real garden, the one you see here is always growing. Even today, people from around the world are building, designing and thinking, continuing the work that will one day find its way to this garden to inspire generations to come.

Daily Tours

Free, guided tours of the Rocket Garden are given several times a day. See the [daily schedule](#) for times.

Atlas-Agena Rocket

The Atlas rocket gave us the power to reach orbit, but with the second stage Agena perched on top, we now had the ability to explore. In January 1962, the Atlas-Agena launched Ranger 3 – a robotic spacecraft – and sent it racing toward the moon. The plan was to capture and send home pictures of the moon until impact with the lunar surface. But Ranger 3 missed the target and headed for the sun. It would take four more missions before the Ranger program met with success. With eight total missions, the program sent back more than 11,000 detailed pictures of the lunar surface, including close-ups of the Sea of Tranquility, where Apollo 11 would touch down in 1969.

Delta Rocket

An unassuming rocket with a funny-shaped nose, the Delta helped change the world in very big ways. In March of 1960, it launched the deep space probe Pioneer 5, with the world's first solar power cell onboard to create electricity for the long mission. Five months after that, it launched a Mylar balloon called Echo into orbit. That balloon allowed for the first live television signal to cross the ocean, beginning a global revolution in communication. Just two years later, another Delta rocket upped the ante, launching Telstar, the world's first telecommunications satellite. Suddenly, space was a resource, a place where money could be made, not just spent, paving the way for advancements like GPS, satellite TV, cell phones and smartphones. For the first time, knowledge we gained in space could be applied beyond scientific advancement. It could literally change the world and life in it for people all across the globe.

Delta II

The Delta II served as a venerable industry workhorse, launching 155 times. The rocket launched many significant missions including NASA's rovers Spirit and Opportunity, the Phoenix Mars Lander, ICESat-2, all operational GPS missions through the constellation of 21 GPS II-R missions for the Air Force and commercial missions for Iridium, Globalstar and three DigitalGlobe satellites.

Juno I

After the USSR's successful launch of Sputnik, the world's first man-made satellite, America knew it had to get something into orbit fast if it was to be a major player in the emerging space race. Their answer was Juno I, a two-stage Jupiter atop a Redstone rocket with an added fourth stage. Launched in 1958, Juno I made history, carrying Explorer 1, America's first satellite, into orbit.

Juno II

The Juno II rocket launched Pioneer 4, the first U.S. probe to escape Earth's gravity. Launched in 1959, Pioneer 4 flew past the moon, achieving its primary objective of following an Earth-to-moon trajectory. It finally settled into orbit around the sun, sending home a huge cache of valuable information along the way. This information relay marked the birth of the Deep Space Network – a global network that even today supports satellite communication from the furthest reaches of space.

Mercury-Redstone Rocket

“C’mon...let’s light this candle.” Those were the words of Commander Alan Shepard as he climbed into the Mercury Redstone rocket which would soon make him the first American in outer space. Originally a surface-to-surface missile, the Mercury Redstone stretched the technology of its day to unimagined limits. But nothing could guarantee with absolute certainty that Shepard would make it back alive. As America held its breath, the Redstone ascended 116 miles into the air. Fifteen minutes later, the Commander splashed down safely in his tiny capsule, Freedom 7. NASA and the nation breathed a sigh of relief.

Mercury-Atlas Rocket

After two suborbital flights, the time had come for an American to orbit Earth. The Mercury-Atlas was chosen for the job, launching John Glenn on an historic three-orbit flight on February 20, 1962. He proved humans could work in a weightless environment, piloting the Friendship 7 for most of the flight after automatic altitude systems failed.

Gemini-Titan II Rocket

Originally intended as a weapon, the Titan II rocket was technically an intercontinental ballistic missile, designed to deliver nuclear warheads into enemy territory from across oceans. As a weapon it was considered extremely reliable, which made it the perfect vehicle to launch spacecrafts during the 1965 and 1966 Gemini missions. The Titan II on display here was not built for NASA but rather is a demilitarized rocket acquired from the U.S. Air Force. Look to the top, and you’ll find a replica of a two-seat Gemini capsule, ready for liftoff.

Saturn 1B

A single Redstone rocket took man into space. A Saturn 1B – made up of eight Redstones bundled together at its base – put man into orbit. It was a Saturn 1B that launched the unmanned Apollo 5, the three-man Apollo 7, all three Skylab crews and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project into orbit. The Saturn 1B on display here is the last surviving flight-ready vehicle of its kind anywhere in the world. This rocket was readied as a backup rescue vehicle for the Skylab 4 mission and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, and was the primary vehicle for a cancelled Skylab 5 mission. Look for this rocket’s Command Service Module (CSM) on display at the Apollo/Saturn V Center.

Saturn V F-1 Engine

The most powerful liquid-fueled rocket engine ever created, the F-1 engine was a critical component in sending astronauts to the moon during the Apollo Program. In fact, the Saturn V rocket required a cluster of five F-1 engines generating more than 7.5 million pounds of thrust to lift the rocket off the pad. It was said at the time of the Saturn V launch that except for a nuclear explosion, the sound of those engines firing was the loudest man-made noise ever produced.

Mercury and Gemini Capsules

Climb aboard the spacecrafts that made history. Sit inside the Mercury, and Gemini capsules for a hands-on look at the progression of the American space program. From the Mercury capsule, which held just one man, through the Gemini capsule, which held two, experience for yourself the tight quarters and cramped conditions astronauts of two generations encountered as they left Earth and headed for the heavens.