

MailOnline

'Astronauts' celebrate Chinese New Year inside the fake space capsule that's on a 520-day mission to Mars (without leaving Earth)

By [Richard Hartley-parkinson](#)

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After 247 days in their locked steel capsule, six researchers on a 520 mock flight to Mars celebrated Chinese New Year ending a string of celebrations to mark significant days in January.

The latest pictures from the Mars 500 windowless capsule, set up at a Moscow Research centre since June, shows the group of spacemen celebrating the 'Spring Festival' along with many traditions from different countries.

If they were on a real mission to Mars, they would have entered orbit around the red planet just before their party, which was organised by Chinese crew member, Wang Yue.



Crew member Wang Yue practiced his calligraphy for the Chinese New Year and prepared six posters with different wishes for each member



The crew goes kung fu to mark the Chinese New Year, also known as the 'spring festival'

He has trained in calligraphy for months and made six banners, each with six different personal wishes, and taught the others how to speak some Chinese.

Marking one another's nationalities, on January 1 the group held two parties, first to celebrate Russia's New Year and then two hours later as Italy and France took part in festivities.

Writing about the Russian excitement over new year, French astronaut Romain Charles said: 'I was equally surprised to learn how important the New Year party was in Russia.'

'At the end of December, I could see that my three Russian crewmates were more and more excited by the upcoming event. It took me several days to understand why I couldn't match their "cheering level".'

'In our Western countries we tend to celebrate Christmas in our families and then the New Year's Eve is spent with friends. Here in Russia you have to imagine celebrating both Christmas and New Year on the same day to have an idea of the importance of it.'

'Traditionally they would begin the party with their families until 01:00 or 02:00 at the morning. Then they meet with friends to continue the festivities until dawn!'



The crew would have just entered the orbit of Mars by the Chinese New Year if they were on a real mission to the red planet



The crew, from Russia, Italy and France, celebrated twice on January 1 to mark their countries welcoming the new year

Russian crew members, Sukhrob Kamolov and Alexey Sitev, both woke up more than an hour early because they were so excited.

Soon after New Year the group had two religious festivals to chose from, the Orthodox Christmas, based on the Julian calender, and the Epiphany.

Diego Urbina, at 26 he is the youngest crew member, became king for the day in the Epiphany celebration after Romain introduced them to a French tradition where a porcelain figure is put inside a cake (right) and whoever finds it wins.

Romain added: 'As an international crew it's a pleasure to understand and celebrate each other's traditions. And it also provides a good change from our day's work.'



Italian Diego Urbina, 26, became 'king for the day' in a celebration of the Epiphany after the crew was introduced to a French tradition' where a porcelain figure is put inside a cake (right) and whoever finds it wins

Places:

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If i was in this experiment, by this stage I would of lost my mind to the extent that in that Kung Fu picture, I would be naked with my underpants on my head, and two pencils up my nose!!! Fair play to them all and well done for your success so far.

- JP, Manchester, 07/2/2011 11:56

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The problem is this. Sending people to Mars CAN be done. But bringing them back again could never be achieved. You would need the same vast rockets that got them off the Earth in the first place available on Mars. Forget it... love it or loath it, you're stuck on Planet Earth.

- Brett McBain, Crete and Norway (ex-pat), 06/2/2011 12:20

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War is more important to the West than science or education...just look at where the cuts are being made in the national budgets of Western countries for proof. The East is picking up the torch and moving forward...

- Bill, Manila Philippines, 06/2/2011 11:48

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the chinese new year begins in march and its the year of the rabbit, i think.

- casey, bath, 06/2/2011 11:12

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I told my Mother-in-Law she was a Dragon (I didn't mention...as in the year of!) ... She was not impressed! And being a Rabbit, I hopped out of there-pronto!

- A+I+D+Y, UK, 06/2/2011 10:39

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NASA don't want any body up there, simply because we will uncover the truth about the Moon Landing was pure fiction. le no evidence on the moon.

- Broggsb, Queenstown NZ, 06/2/2011 10:27

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