

Russian Mission to Mars 'arrives' at Red Planet

A gruelling Russian endurance experiment meant to simulate a mission to Mars has 'arrived' at the Red Planet.



By [Andrew Osborn](#)

[\(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-osborn/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-osborn/), **Moscow**

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Called Mars 500, the experiment is being conducted inside a mock spaceship inside a scientific institute in Moscow and entails a six-man "crew" being isolated inside what amounts to a claustrophobic series of metal tubes for a minimum of 520 days.

The six men, who are in reality paid volunteers, have spent the last eight months simulating a flight to Mars complete with mock emergencies, scientific experiments, space food, delayed communications, and no natural light.

Three of the men are [Russians](#) [\(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/), two are Europeans, and one is Chinese.

Mission controllers said the men's "ship" finally reached "Mars" on Monday and began orbiting the Red Planet ahead of a planned landing on 12 February.

In reality, the landing vehicle is another metal capsule, while the surface of Mars itself is replicated by a glorified sandpit.

[Mars 500: how realistic is the 'Mission to Mars'?](#)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/space/8298959/Mars-500-how-realistic-is-the-Mission-to-Mars.html>

[Two-year 'Mars mission'](#)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/space/7800666/Mission-to-Mars-simulation-to-start-in-Moscow.html>

[Nasa greenlights £275 million mission to Mars](#)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/space/8045435/Nasa-greenlights-275-million-mission-to-Mars.html>

The plan is for three of the crew to stay behind in "the spaceship," a training installation built in the 1970s as part of the Soviet space programme, while the other three land on Mars.

Three spacewalks in authentic spacesuits are planned as are a series of mock geological experiments.

The ship will then begin its long journey back to "Earth" arriving in November when the six men will finally be free to resume their normal lives.

"It will be very tough on the boys because of the monotony," said Boris Morukov, the mission controller and a former cosmonaut. "The fatigue and the thought that the mission is over can be fraught with negative consequences."

The idea of the experiment is to learn more about the physical and psychological demands of long-distance space travel even though a real mission to Mars is thought to be decades away.

Women were not included in the crew in order to reduce sexual tension, and the six men, who are only allowed to shower once a week, are being paid around 64,000 pounds each for their trouble.