

Tim Peake



Tim's Background

Timothy 'Tim' Nigel Peake was born in Chichester, West Sussex, England, on 7th April 1972 and grew up in a nearby village. Tim has an older sister called Fiona. Their mother, Angela, worked as a midwife and their father, Nigel, was employed as a journalist. Tim's father had always had a keen interest in historic aircraft and Tim accompanied him to air shows from an early age: this is what fuelled Tim's fascination with flying.

He studied at the Chichester High School for Boys in 1983, leaving in 1990 to enrol at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

European Space Agency

In 2008, when the European Space Agency (ESA) announced it was accepting applications for new astronauts, Tim saw the advert online and decided it was once in a lifetime opportunity that he couldn't afford to miss. He was ideally placed to apply, with his flying experience and academic qualifications. His application joined 8000 others in the competition to achieve a place!

Military Career

Despite having been intrigued by stars and the universe as a child, Tim pursued his passion for flying and trained to be a pilot resulting in an eighteen-year military career, flying a broad range of helicopters and aircraft. His skills were tested the most intensely in Bosnia when Tim was in active service during the war in the Balkans in the 1990s.

In 2005, Tim trained to be an instructor, joining the prestigious Empire Test Pilots' School and graduating with an award for the 'best rotary wing pilot'.

He also completed a degree in Flight Dynamics and Evaluation from the University of Portsmouth before flying Apache helicopters in Texas with the US army. Luckily, on his return to the UK, the Apache was being introduced into the British army so Tim made valuable contributions to the development of the training programme.

Tim left the army in 2009, after completing over 3000 flying hours to become a test pilot - a pilot who flies an aircraft to test its performance.

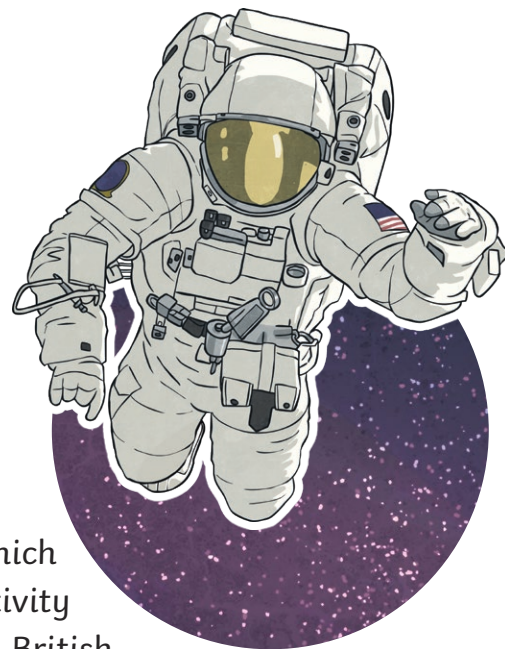
In 2009, Tim sat multiple exams and assessments, testing his intelligence and skills including memory, spatial awareness and concentration. More than 900 candidates were whittled down to ten – amazingly, Tim was one of them. Weeks went by before Tim finally received a phone call from the ESA offering him one of the six available places to train to be an astronaut with the European Astronaut Corps in Cologne, Germany.

Basic training involved acquiring all of the knowledge needed to become an astronaut, including space law, rocket propulsion and space flight engineering.

Tim also had to learn to speak Russian (the language used by the ESA training programme). As training progressed, Tim learnt survival skills, CPR (short for cardiopulmonary resuscitation - a medical procedure of repeated cycles of compression of the chest and artificial respiration, performed to help a person who has suffered cardiac arrest) and how to move in zero gravity.

Blast Off!

On 15th December 2015, at 11.03 a.m., the nation collectively held its breath as Tim Peake, Yuri Malenchenko and Tim Kopra launched. Tim reached his destination at 5:33 p.m. but the docking procedure did not happen smoothly, meaning the team had to dock manually (by hand, without computers). More than two hours later, the hatch opened and Tim was welcomed onboard, becoming the first British ESA astronaut to inhabit the International Space Station (ISS).



Tim spent six months living and working in space, during which time he completed the first spacewalk (a period of physical activity engaged in by an astronaut in space outside a spacecraft) by a British astronaut. With his crewmate, Tim Kopra, Tim travelled 50 metres (double the length of a normal-sized swimming pool) to reach their maintenance work. The mission was cut short when Tim Kopra reported water in his helmet but the main task had been completed successfully. In addition, Tim completed the London Marathon on the ISS treadmill and appeared via video link at the BRIT Awards ceremony.

Coming Home

Tim returned to Earth on 18th June 2016, travelling in the Soyuz capsule (a spacecraft designed by the Soviet space programme) at 25 times the speed of sound and landing in Kazakhstan at 9:15 a.m. During his mission, Tim had made 3000 orbits of Earth, covering about 125 million km. It took approximately two months for Tim's body to recover from the effects of zero gravity (the state or condition in which there is no apparent force of gravity acting on a body).

Tim commented that, as a child, like many other children, he dreamt of going into space but never seriously considered it a possibility. However, a lifelong fascination with flying, years of training as a pilot and then an astronaut, along with some luck, turned his dream into a reality. While in space and since returning home, Tim has worked a lot with children on various science projects to inspire future generations to strive to become astronauts too.

Disclaimer: All facts and statistics correct as of September 2023.