



Liu Yang, China's first woman in space, boarded a spacecraft in western China on Saturday
Agence France-Presse – Getty Images.

First Chinese Woman in Space

China sent a crew of three, including the country's first female astronaut, into space on Saturday to carry out its first manned docking mission, an important step in an ambitious plan to build a Chinese space station by 2020.

The female astronaut was Liu Yang❖ who is a pilot and served as a crew member on the space mission Shenzhou❖ 9. On 16 June 2012, Liu became the first Chinese woman in space.

Liu was born in Zhengzhou❖, Henan❖ in 1978, into a family of Linzhou, Anyang❖. She graduated from People's Liberation Army Air Force Aviation College of Changchun❖.

Liu joined the People's Liberation Army Air Force in 1997 and qualified as a pilot before becoming the deputy head of a flight unit, holding the rank of major. She is a veteran pilot with 1,680 hours of flying experience. After two years of astronaut training, Liu excelled in testing before being selected with another woman, Wang Yaping❖, as a candidate for the astronaut corps.

Liu was selected for the crew of Shenzhou 9, the first manned mission to the Chinese space station Tiangong❖ 1, along with Jing Haipeng❖, the first repeat Chinese space traveller, and Liu Wang❖. Liu became the first female Chinese astronaut to go into space. The mission was launched on 16 June 2012, 49 years to the day after the first female space traveller, cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova was launched.

The Soviet Union sent the first woman into space in 1963. The first American woman in space was Sally Ride, in 1983.

She is married with no children. During this manned space mission, Liu performed experiments in space medicine. LiuYang has been described as an eloquent speaker, an avid reader and also a lover of cooking.

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