

# Space Shuttle Discovery Flies to Smithsonian



America's Space Shuttle Discovery flew over the nation's capital on April 17, to retire to its final resting place at the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum and research complex. Its final "flight" (piggy-backed) is dwarfed by its flight mileage in space: according to one source, it flew 148 million miles, more than the distance from the earth to the sun.

Its thirty-nine missions, from 1984 to 2011, is more flights than any other spacecraft in history has achieved.



Piggy-backed flyover of Washington, D.C., on April 17, 2012

### **Smithsonian Museums**

The Smithsonian Institution has over 136 million museum items. According to Wikipedia, it is the largest museum complex in the world, with enough rooms and exhibits to captivate a tourist for many days, if not weeks.

### **Ropen Controversy**

A Smithsonian blog post portrayed the *ropen* of Papua New Guinea as a “myth.” This caused many responses on other blog posts, early in 2011, critical of the reasoning of the writer, Brian Switek. Apparently, the Smithsonian has not responded to those comments. The ropen is reported, by some cryptozoologists, to be a modern living *Rhamphorhynchoid* pterosaur with intrinsic bioluminescence.

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# First Human in Space

Fifty years ago today, Yuri Gagarin, of the U.S.S.R., became the first human to be launched into space, electrifying the world and shocking the Soviet Union's major competitor, the United States of America. The Russian pilot circled the earth in one orbit, in a Vostok spacecraft, to be precise the Vostok 3KA, which had flown in six unmanned test missions prior to the 1961 historic mission.

The Vostok 3KA was developed for two purposes: as a manned spacecraft and as a platform for spying. Without the spy camera, it would have failed to obtain support from the Communist party, for the Cold War had been warming up for years.

Yuri Gagarin died on 27 March 1968, while on a routine training flight in a MiG-15UTI. The plane crashed near the town of Kirzhach. Although conspiracy theories have been suggested, it is generally believed to have been an accident, possibly partially from the use of outdated weather information.

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## Child Care in Long Beach, California

Social interaction is important for children, but preschoolers need a safe place to learn early people-skills