Space travellers by country and milestones

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What interests you most about space travel? Why?
2. Which famous space missions or astronauts do you know?
3. Should tourists go to space? Give one reason.

II. KEY VOCABULARY

orbit
The curved path of an object as it goes around a planet or star.

astronaut
A person trained to travel and work in space.

satellite
A machine sent into space that moves around Earth or another body.

launch
To send a rocket, satellite or mission into space.

treaty
A formal agreement between countries, often about rules or peace.

boundary
A line or limit that marks where something begins or ends.

tourist
A person who pays to travel for pleasure, not as a job.

record
The best or highest known amount or achievement.

III. READING

World Space Week runs from 4 to 10 October and marks the value of space technology; the UN began it in 1999. The Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first satellite to orbit Earth. In 1961, Soviet astronaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space, completing one orbit in 108 minutes at about 27,400km/h.

In 1967, the Outer Space Treaty set peaceful rules, and in 1969 Apollo 11 landed on the moon and Neil Armstrong walked on it. There is no single boundary for space: many use the Karman line at 100km, while US agencies count flights above 80km.

By these measures, at least 746 people from 52 countries have gone to space, including paying tourists. The US has sent 369 people, the Soviet Union and Russia 138, and China 29. Ages vary: the median is 40, from 18-year-old Oliver Daemen in 2021 to 90-year-old Ed Dwight in 2024. In 2026, the Artemis II crew flew around the moon and set a distance record of about 406,771km.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **Al Jazeera***: "World Space Week: Which countries have sent...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When is World Space Week held each year?
2. Who was the first human in space, and in which year?
3. What two heights are used to define the start of space?
4. How many people from how many countries have gone to space?
5. Which country has sent the most people to space?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Which space milestone in the text impresses you most? Why?
2. Should countries agree on one boundary for space?
3. Should there be an age limit for space travel? Why or why not?
4. What should come next after Artemis II?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Connecting words

Connecting words link ideas and show relationships: and (addition), but/although/whereas (contrast), because (reason), so/therefore (result). Choose the linker that matches the meaning and structure.

"Apollo 11 landed, **and** *Neil Armstrong walked on the moon."*

"Many use 100km, **while** *some agencies use 80km."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Teams delayed the launch, (because / so) the weather was poor. _____
2. The US has sent 369 people, (where / whereas) China has sent 29. _____
3. The launch began (because / despite) strong winds. _____
4. (Although / But) it was cloudy, the launch continued. _____
5. Skies were clear; (however / therefore) the launch began. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10–12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: orbit, boundary, treaty, tourist. Use a quick diagram for the Karman line and 80km line.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (dates and firsts) then detail (numbers and countries). Check that students can say large numbers aloud, such as 27,400 and 406,771.
- Differentiate: stronger students summarise one paragraph from memory; others underline facts to retell with a partner.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Invite a quick vote, then ask students to justify their choice with one number from the text.
2. Board both heights (100km/80km). Put pairs on each side to argue for clarity vs tradition.
3. Elicit barriers (training, cost, access). Push for one practical action from each student.
4. List current milestones, then have small groups propose one realistic next step with a reason.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Presentation: In pairs, prepare a 60-second timeline talk linking Sputnik 1, Gagarin, Apollo 11 and Artemis II.

Data task: Draw a bar chart for US (369), USSR/Russia (138) and China (29) space travellers, then write three comparison sentences.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Connecting words

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When is World Space Week held each year?
   From 4 to 10 October.
2. Who was the first human in space, and in which year?
   Yuri Gagarin in 1961.
3. What two heights are used to define the start of space?
   100km by many, and 80km by US agencies.
4. How many people from how many countries have gone to space?
   At least 746 people from 52 countries.
5. Which country has sent the most people to space?
   The US, with 369 people.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Teams delayed the launch, (because / so) the weather was poor. **because**
2. The US has sent 369 people, (where / whereas) China has sent 29. **whereas**
3. The launch began (because / despite) strong winds. **despite**
4. (Although / But) it was cloudy, the launch continued. **Although**
5. Skies were clear; (however / therefore) the launch began. **therefore**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Connecting words link ideas and show relationships: and (addition), but/although/whereas (contrast), because (reason), so/therefore (result). Choose the linker that matches the meaning and structure. (Examples constructed.)

"Apollo 11 landed, **and** *Neil Armstrong walked on the moon."*

"Many use 100km, **while** *some agencies use 80km."*