

# ORBIT

Astro Space Stamp Society

## And now a Starliner to Space

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# A cover flown on Soyuz 9

## There is still something to discover in astrophilately!

By Marino Massimo De Caro

On the evening of June 1 1970, the Soyuz 9 spacecraft lifted off from ramp 31.6 of the Baikonur Cosmodrome (USSR). The crew consisted of Commander Andriyan Nikolaev, who was also the husband of the first woman in Space Valentina Tereshkova, and flight engineer Vitaly Ivanovich Sevastyanov.

The launch of the Soyuz 9 spacecraft was the first launch at night, but this was not the only record achieved by this important mission.

One of the goals of the mission was to demonstrate, with a duration of about eighteen days, that man was able to stay on microgravity for a long period without threatening the physical safety and his general state of health.

During the mission the crew performed multiple activities, including many biomedical and physical experiments on the cosmonauts themselves, who also found time to follow Mexico's World Cup on the monitors and to play chess. Extensive research was also conducted on the psychological and social effects of a prolonged flight into space.

During the mission Valentina Tereshkova, together with her daughter, was also able to speak to her husband twice. Starting from the twelfth flight day, the crew began to experience concentration deficits and they even made some small mistakes during their daily activity.

The mission marked a new record of living in space and was the demonstration, that man could stay in space much longer than already known, the longest mission at the time being the missions of the Apollo program. This mission paved the way for the



*One common cover of the launch of Soyuz-9, with special postmark, signed by the two cosmonauts.*

launch of the first experimental space station Salyut 1. It was evident that the psychological aspect had to be carefully investigated, including relaxing activities.

After returning to Earth, it was realised that the two cosmonauts had clearly lost weight. It took them almost one month to recover from their weight loss and regain their original physical strength. In space they had often neglected the planned physical activities in order to carry out the scientific activities that they considered more important.

Their bodies' reaction was therefore a further demonstration of the absolute need of physical exercise during long missions in space. The previous record of living in space for 13 days, reached by the American astronauts Frank Borman and Jim Lovell during Gemini 7 mission in December 1965, had therefore endured for almost five years. Soyuz 9 restored the primacy of the Soviet Union.

In the 2018 edition of the book "Pioneer Rocket Mail & Space Mail", Walter



The only known cover, flown on Soyuz-9.

Hopferwieser writes on page 248 that: “there is no known envelope, that has been flown on the Soyuz 9 spacecraft”. Indeed covers flown on the Soyuz 9 have never gone through public or private sales. But fortunately, astrophilately can still hold positive surprises.

In fact, in the fall of 2021 in a small American auction house this “flown on the Soyuz 9” cover was put up for sale.

The item is a “First Day Cover” for the release of the Soviet 6 Kopechi stamp (Y.3612) issued on April 12, 1970 to celebrate Cosmonautics Day.

The cover also bears the signatures of the two crew members Commander Andriyan Nikolaev and Flight Engineer Vitaly Sevastyanov, who in addition to his signature, adds in Russian the annotation “Onboard the Soyuz-9 spacecraft, 10 June 1970, 145<sup>th</sup> orbit”.

Interestingly, the same on-board engineer also signed the stamp. This was something that cosmonauts often did, especially with some stamps flown on the first Salyut Space stations.

Obviously, it was now important to verify the authenticity of the cover. Hence the choice to have it examined by Steve Zarelli who certified the authenticity of the signatures on this “extraordinary” and unique astrophilatelic item.

Now we know we are in front of the only known cover flown on the Soyuz 9, so far. I contacted the owner of the auction house to know more about the origin of the item but, obviously, he couldn’t reveal the name of the conferor, he only told me that he was

a prestigious American collector who, because of his work, used to have close relations with the first generation of cosmonauts.

Therefore, for those who love astrophilately, the will to research must never cease. If covers have been carried in space with the Soyuz 4 and the Soyuz 5 missions, as we know they have, it is highly likely that envelopes have also been carried on subsequent missions.

We know that the astrophilatelic bibliography confirms that covers do exist, which were flown with Soyuz 12, Soyuz 13, Soyuz 16 and Soyuz 18 missions. The fact that we have no current knowledge of envelopes flown with the previous missions are currently known this does not mean that they do not exist.

Or at least they don't exist until they pop up in a small auction house in a city surrounded by the American desert.



## Letter of Authenticity

LOA#: Z003952  
Date: November 21, 2021  
Signature(s):  
1. Andrian Nikolayev  
2. Vitaly Sevastyanov

AUTOGRAPH GRADE: 8



Soyuz 9 Crew Signed Postal Cover

This item has been thoroughly examined and compared to Autopen patterns, secretarial exemplars, and known forgery styles. It has been viewed under high magnification to ensure it is hand-signed and not mechanically produced.

After reviewing an extensive file of verified authentic exemplars and applying many years of professional experience, it is my opinion the signature(s) on this item is/are consistent with authentic exemplars.

In my opinion, the signatures on this item are authentic.

This letter must bear my original signature, the Zarelli Space Authentication embossed seal covering a portion of the photograph and grade, and a Zarelli Space Authentication tamper evident hologram. Thank you for the opportunity to review this item.

Ad astral

Steve Zarelli

Steve Zarelli  
Zarelli Space Authentication, LLC



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Letter of authenticity by Steve Zarelli.

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