



ESA astronaut Michel Tognini at the Technik Museum Speyer

Former ESA chief astronaut gives a talk about his missions



Michel Tognini (right) with Alexander Viktorenko and Alexander Kaleri on 27 July 1992 after their rescue from the Soyuz TM-14 capsule shortly after landing in the Kazakh Steppe. Source: Gerhard Daum.



Michel Tognini (right) works with Steven Hawley on 24 July 1999 on the Southwest Ultraviolet Imaging System (SWUIS) experiment in the middle deck of the Columbia space shuttle during the STS-93 mission. Source: Gerhard Daum.

Speyer. On Saturday, 25 March 2023, the French ESA astronaut Michel Tognini will be visiting the Technik Museum Speyer to give a talk on his two space missions. Michel Tognini flew into space to the Russian space station Mir in 1992 and then aboard the American Columbia space shuttle in 1999. Tognini was the ESA's chief astronaut from May 2003 to December 2004, thus leading the astronaut division at the European Astronaut Centre (EAC). From January 2005 to 1 November 2011, the French director of the European Astronaut Centre (EAC) was in Cologne. His lecture, which will be presented in English, will take place from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Forum cinema at the Technik Museum Speyer. The talk is included in the regular admission ticket for the museum. Further information can be found at www.technik-museum.de/tognini.

The "Antares" mission on the Russian space station Mir

Michel Tognini launched his first mission, Antares, on 27 July 1992. As a flight engineer, he flew with the spacecraft Soyuz TM-15 from the cosmodrome in Baikonur to the Russian space station Mir. With his Russian colleagues Anatoly Soloviev and Sergei Avdeyev, the twelfth regular Mir crew, he docked to the Mir space station after two days. They joined the eleventh regular crew, made up of Alexander Viktorenko and Alexander Kaleri, who were already on board, and conducted a joint Soviet-French experimental programme in the fields of biomedicine, technology and physics for 14 days. One experiment, for example, investigated blood pressure and circulatory regulation as well as the distribution of blood flow in zero gravity and the effects on hormone balance. Another experiment investigated the adaptation of the sensory organs to conditions in space, while another involved measurements of the radiation field surrounding the astronauts. On 10 August 1992, Michel Tognini returned to Earth with the Soyuz TM-14 spacecraft following a successful landing in Kazakhstan.

Michel Tognini spent 13 days, 18 hours, 56 minutes and 20 seconds in space on his first mission, during 218 orbits of Earth.

The "STS-93" mission – Chandra – on the US Columbia space shuttle

Tognini launched his second mission with the US space shuttle Columbia on 22 July 1999. There, he served as mission specialist for the STS-93 mission. Among other things, the special feature of this mission was that Eileen Collins became the first female commander of a space shuttle mission. The crew's main task was to transport the "Chandra" X-ray observatory into space. To this day, the telescope still allows scientists to study exotic phenomena such as exploding stars, quasars and black holes. Just a few hours after the launch, following a brief system check, Chandra was lifted out of the cargo bay using the robotic arm (RMS) of the Columbia space shuttle and sent into space. On 27 July 1999, after almost five days, the Columbia landed on runway 33 of the Shuttle Landing Facility (SLF) at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. On his second mission, Michel Tognini spent four days, 22 hours, 49 minutes and 34 seconds in space, during 80 orbits of Earth. During his two missions, Michel Tognini spent a total of 18 days, 17 hours, 45 minutes and 54 seconds in space, during 298 orbits of Earth.

Professional background

Michel Tognini was born on 30 September 1949 in Vincennes, France. He received an academic degree in mathematics in 1970 from the military school in Grenoble and a degree in engineering from the French air force academy "Salon de Provence" in 1973, before completing his training as a fighter pilot at the French air force academy "École de l'Air". In September 1985, the French space agency CNES selected him for its astronaut corps and, in August 1986, he was nominated as a replacement for Jean-Loup Chrétien for the Mir-Aragatz mission. From November 1986 onwards, he subsequently prepared himself for the mission at the Yuri-Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in the Soviet Star City. In 1991, he returned to the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre to begin training for the third Franco-Russian "Antares" mission, which took place from 27 July to 10 August 1992. For his further training as a mission specialist, he went to the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, USA, in 1995. In July 1999, he flew into space for the second time aboard the Columbia space shuttle as part of the STS-93 mission.

Tognini became an ESA astronaut in November 1999, before retiring from the European Astronaut Corps as an active astronaut in May 2003 and, from then on until December 2004, working as Chief Astronaut of the ESA and thus as Head of the Astronaut Division at the European Astronaut Centre (EAC). From January 2005 to 1 November 2011, Michel Tognini, the director of the European Astronaut Centre (EAC), was in Cologne.

About the Technik Museen Sinsheim Speyer – from underwater into space

Supported by the non-profit club Auto + Technik Museum e. V. and based on the motto “for fans from fans”, the Technik Museen Sinsheim Speyer have about 3,500 members worldwide. The financing is exclusively based on admission fees, donations as well as membership fees of club members. All surpluses are used for the museum’s maintenance and expansion. On an area of more than 200,000 sqm, the Technik Museen Sinsheim Speyer present more than 6,000 exhibits from all fields of technological history in a worldwide unique variety. The exhibits range from submarines to vintage cars, from the Concorde to the Space Shuttle BURAN. Besides the permanent exhibition and the changing special exhibitions, there are numerous vehicle and club meetings as well as events. Open 365 days a year, the museums attract over one million visitors a year. Our two IMAX large-format cinemas are a true highlight. While the IMAX 3D cinema in Sinsheim – “the cinema with the highest resolution in the world” – shows exclusive documentations and the latest Hollywood blockbusters, films are projected onto a giant dome in the IMAX DOME cinema in Speyer.

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Mediabox: <http://media.technik-museum.de/>

Pressekontakt: Corinna Siegenthaler, Tel. 06232 / 6708-68, siegenthaler@technik-museum.de