

## Yi So-yeon



Yi So-yeon is a trailblazing biotechnologist who made history as the first South Korean citizen in space, breaking both gender and national barriers in STEM. Born on June 2, 1978, in Gwangju, South Korea, she attended Gwangju Science High School and earned her bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. in engineering and biotech systems at KAIST. She was chosen from over 36,000 applicants; she became South Korea's first astronaut. South Korea paid Russia \$20 million to include a South Korean cosmonaut on a Russian spaceflight. Yi launched on April 8, 2008, aboard Soyuz TMA-12, spending 11 days on the International Space Station conducting 18 experiments. As one of few women globally to be her nation's first astronaut, she is a powerful inspiration to Korean women in science. Fun fact: special "space kimchi" was developed for her mission!

Recently, Yi So-yeon has been active in public speaking and STEM outreach, sharing her journey from Gwangju to space. She's engaged with satellite startups in Silicon Valley and has also been involved in digital prototyping software. Outside of work, she enjoys music, cooking Korean food, and gardening, offering a glimpse into her personal side.