

# Unmanned Satellites on Postage Stamps:

## 45. The Magellan Satellite

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This is the forty-fifth in a series of articles about unmanned satellites on postage stamps. This article features the **Magellan** planetary mission to Venus. Magellan was launched by Space Shuttle Atlantis (STS-30R) on 4 May 1989. The Magellan satellite is named after **Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), a world explorer who's expedition circumnavigated the globe in a sailing ship.**

Magellan was a dedicated US mission to map the surface of Venus with a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR). This was a follow-on to the earlier Venus mapping accomplished by Pioneer-12, which was launched in 1978. Magellan was designed as a low cost mission; its major components were originally flight spares from earlier missions such as Galileo, Viking, Voyager, Mariner, Skylab, and Ulysses!

Magellan had a 3.7 m diameter high-gain antenna used both for communications and for the SAR. The spacecraft was about 6.4 m long, and, with two solar panels, one on each side of body, about 9.2 m across.

Magellan began orbiting Venus in 1990. After several mission mapping cycles, in which radar returns, visible images, and gravity field data were obtained, over 99% of the planet's surface was mapped, and the spacecraft made a final end-of-mission descent into the Venusian

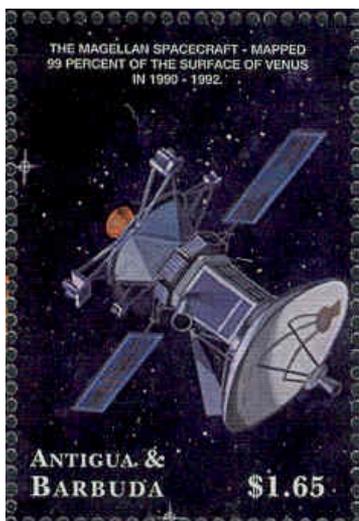
atmosphere in 1994.

Magellan is featured on a number of postal items, many of them miniature sheets which also depict other notable spacecraft. The first postage stamp showing Magellan was issued by Sierra Leone in 1989. Most of the other postal items were issued in the early 1990s, but items continued to appear into the 2010s.

The stamp issued by Bulgaria in 1991 also shows Space Shuttle Atlantis, and a cancel from Ukraine in 2005 shows the Space Shuttle as well as Magellan. In addition, stamps issued by Rwanda in 2010 and Tanzania in 1994 show the booster stage still attached to Magellan and the solar panels still folded against the spacecraft body.

A few postal items also show Ferdinand Magellan, stamps from Comoro Islands in 1992 and Congo in 2003.

**A checklist of postal items showing the Magellan satellite (<http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/magellan.htm>) is available on the Website developed by the authors for the un-manned satellites featured in this series of articles (<http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/satellites.htm>). E-mail correspondence is welcome. Don Hillger can be reached at [don.hillger@colostate.edu](mailto:don.hillger@colostate.edu) and Garry Toth at [gmt.varia@gmail.com](mailto:gmt.varia@gmail.com).**



*Antigua and Barbuda*  
2244d (Mi2931)



*Comoro Islands* 794  
(Mi1000A) 1992



*St. Vincent* 1476 (Mi1728) 1991



*Malagasy Republic* 970 (Mi1249A) 1990



*Sierra Leone* 1074f (Mi1262) 1989



*Congo (Republic)*  
923 (Mi1278A) 1991



Tanzania 1324 (Mi2022) 1994



Rwanda Unknown c (Mi?) 1991



United States (Zazzle.com) personalized postage



Ukraine cancel 2005

