

Un-manned Satellites on Postage Stamps


31 – The Elektron Series

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This is the thirty-first in a series of articles about un-manned satellites on postage stamps. This article features the Russian Elektron-series satellites. Four Elektron satellites were successfully launched, with Elektron-1 and 2 paired up on 30 January 1964, and Elektron-3 and 4 similarly paired on 10 July 1964.

Elektron was one of the earliest Soviet scientific satellite missions to be authorized following the initial Sputnik series. The spacecraft had the mission of mapping the van Allen radiation belts at higher inclinations than previous U.S. satellites had followed. In these missions, two different types of spacecraft were paired and launched together, as mentioned above. Elektron-1 and 3 were put into a lower orbit to map the inner van Allen belt, while Elektron-2 and 4 were boosted to a higher orbit to study the outer belt.

Elektron-1 and 3 had cylindrical bodies 0.75 m in diameter and 1.3 m long, with six solar panels extending outward, almost like paddles. Elektron-2 and 4 were shaped like the cupola of a public building, in the basic form of a cylinder with a flattened and broadened end, a diameter of 1.8 m and a height of 2.4 m.

Both Elektron types are easily distinguished and are represented on many postal items, mostly from eastern bloc nations. Some of the items show both Elektron-1 and 2, (or Elektron-3 and 4) since they were launched together. 

Checklist of Elektron Satellite Postal Stamps, Souvenir Sheets and Mini-sheets

Country	Catalog No.	Type of Item	Issued	Notes
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2693 on 4x Russia 4517	1995?	Elektron-1
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2693 on 4x Russia 5984	1995?	Elektron-1
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2693 on 4x Russia 5987	1995?	Elektron-1
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2693 on 4x Russia 6066	1995?	Elektron-1
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2693 on 4x Russia 6067	1995?	Elektron-1
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2694 on 4x Russia 4517	1995?	Elektron-2
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2694 on 4x Russia 5984	1995?	Elektron-2
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2694 on 4x Russia 5987	1995?	Elektron-2
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2694 on 4x Russia 6066	1995?	Elektron-2
Buriatia Republic	Local	Cuba 2694 on 4x Russia 6067	1995?	Elektron-2
Cambodia	781 (Mi859)		1987	Elektron-2/4
Cuba	1287 (Mi1356)		1967	Elektron-1 & 2
Cuba	1289a (BL30)	One of simulated perforation MS8 (1282-1289)	1967	Elektron-1 & 2
Cuba	2135 (Mi2211)	Stamp-on-stamp: Poland 822	1977	Elektron-2/4
Cuba	2693 (Mi2844)		1984	Elektron-1
Cuba	2694 (Mi2845)		1984	Elektron-2
Korea (North)	1243 (Mi1285)		1974	Elektron-1 & 2
Korea (North)	1446 (Mi1492)		1976	Elektron-1/3
Laos	703 (Mi908)		1986	Elektron-2/4
Mongolia	C33j (Mi738)	One of MS12 (C33 (a-j))	1972	Elektron-2
Mongolia	726 (BL32)	Upper-left margin of MS3 (726 a-c)	1973	Elektron-2/4
Nicaragua	1659 (Mi2821)		1987	Elektron-2/4
Poland	1269 (Mi1558)		1964	Elektron-2
Russia (USSR)	None	Stamped envelope	1961	Elektron-2
Russia (USSR)	None	New Year's greeting card	1974	Elektron-2

*Scott catalog number, unless prefixed with Mi or BL for Michel; "i" prefix denotes imperforate version.

SS# = souvenir sheet, MS# = miniature sheet, where # = stamps in sheet, and numbers in parentheses are the catalog numbers of the stamps.

A checklist of postal items showing Elektrons satellites is also available at <http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/hillger/Elektron.htm>, a website developed by the authors for un-manned satellites at <http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/hillger/satellites.htm>
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