



Tommy Bartlett's MIR Exhibit - Space History in the Heartland -

Tommy Bartlett Exploratory in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., is the only place on Earth where visitors can see, feel and experience an authentic Russian Space Station MIR core module.

Tom Diehl, president of Tommy Bartlett, Inc., brokered the difficult negotiations in 1997 to acquire the authentic 43-foot-long MIR core module from Russia and relocate it to America's Heartland. It had been on display at a Moscow museum, but operators there were in need of money and wanted to sell the spacecraft.

Now on display permanently in Wisconsin Dells, the MIR exhibit is of great international significance. The MIR that was circling the Earth for 15 years was de-orbited on March 23, 2001. It was destroyed upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, leaving the Tommy Bartlett Exploratory MIR as the only publicly accessible and tangible symbol of the once-proud Soviet MIR space program. A third core module built to the same specifications is warehoused in Russia and is not available for viewing.

Bartlett's MIR was thrust into the international spotlight during the de-orbiting of the MIR from space. CNN sent two news crews totaling 22 people to the Wisconsin Dells site to use it as a backdrop for coverage of the event. The network broadcast live from the Exploratory for two days. It was the second time CNN had used the location to cover news about the MIR in space. During the summer of 1997, when a Russian supply ship collided with the MIR in space, CNN also sent a crew to Wisconsin Dells. At that time, Dr. Norman Thagard, the first American astronaut to fly the MIR, was brought in to explain what happened with the near catastrophe and to follow the repair work as it occurred.

Through the years, the Tommy Bartlett Exploratory staff monitored the progress of the MIR mission in space – its triumphs, trials and tribulations. Although it was a bumpy ride, the MIR program paved the way for building the current International Space Station, a program Diehl expects will continue to nurture the public's natural curiosity about space travel and living in space.