

EU, US partners plan 'low-cost' space launcher

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A picture released by Astrium in 2007 of a possible future tourist spaceship. The European technology firm is teaming up with US company Alliant to make a "low-cost" space rocket launcher that could one day take tourists into orbit, the Wall Street Journal reports.

European technology firm Astrium is teaming up with US company Alliant to make a "low-cost" space rocket launcher that could one day take tourists into orbit, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

It said the companies plan a 300-foot (91-metre) launcher dubbed "Liberty" to take [astronauts](#) and scientific payloads into space for about \$180 million (132 million euros) a time, 40 percent cheaper than some current launches.

The newspaper said the project's backers hope to gain funding from US

space agency [NASA](#) for the project, which they say could lead eventually to commercial projects such as orbiting hotels for space tourists.

Astrium, a subsidiary of defence giant EADS, is the main maker of the Ariane commercial rocket, used to launch satellites. US firm Alliant Techsystems is a leading maker of space shuttles.

The companies hope to test the new "low-cost commercial launcher" as soon as 2013, the report said.

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