

Singer Sarah Brightman to become space tourist (Update)

October 10 2012, by Anna Malpas



Famed British singer Sarah Brightman smiles during her press conference in Moscow. Brightman announced that she will blast off next year as a space tourist to the International Space Station (ISS) in a voyage aimed at "realising dreams".

British singer Sarah Brightman revealed on Wednesday that Russia will launch her as a space tourist to the International Space Station (ISS) in a multi-million dollar voyage aimed at "realising dreams".

The soprano and crossover singer, 52, would be the first tourist to go into space after a hiatus in the space tourism programme since 2009, on a ticket costing tens of millions of dollars.

"I am planning to become a space flight participant," Brightman, who had her first hit with a 1970s disco anthem "I Lost My Heart to a Starship Trooper", told a news conference in Moscow.

The schedule for her flight "will be determined very shortly by (Russian space agency) Roscosmos and the ISS partners," she added.

Brightman, known for her roles in West End musicals such as "The Phantom of the Opera", added she had been approved medically and will do six months training in Russia.

The commercial flights to the ISS for space tourists are organised through US-based company Space Adventures, whose chairman Eric Anderson accompanied Brightman in Moscow.

"My journey is about realising aims and dreams," the UNESCO artist for peace said.

She later told AFP: "I will be the first (musician in space) and would like to experiment and see how I can sing from space and I would like to connect with the Earth in some way."

The singer said she had yet to choose which song she would perform in space.

Brightman rose to fame in the 1980s with roles in the wildly popular musicals of composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, who became her husband. They divorced in 1990.

Alexei Krasnov, head of human spaceflight at Roscosmos, said that the task of taking Brightman into space is "fully achievable in the nearest future" and confirmed that she had no medical problems.

He refused to give the exact price of Brightman's ticket as a paying passenger, saying it is a "big, huge sum counted in the tens of millions of dollars."

Brightman said she underwent a medical assessment in July in Russia's legendary Star City, where astronauts and cosmonauts train amid Soviet-era mosaics and monuments to Yuri Gagarin.

"For me just as an artist it was like walking and going through an experience in art, really. they've just kept everything as it was," she said.

The training included undergoing G-force testing up to a point called ballistic entry on a centrifuge apparatus.

"It's a little like feeling you have an elephant on your chest and you somehow have to find a way of breathing and staying conscious," she said.

Krasnov told journalists that Brightman could fly in October 2015, which the singer confirmed to AFP as an approximate date.

"That was my sort of understanding—a little bit earlier. Obviously they are creating all of their dates at the moment."

Previous space tourists visiting the ISS on a total of eight trips have included the Canadian founder of the Cirque du Soleil, Guy Laliberte, and Iranian-American entrepreneur Anousheh Ansari, so far the only woman.

Russia stopped taking space tourists in 2009 because of lack of room in its cramped three-person Soyuz space capsules that ferry astronauts to the ISS.

But Space Adventures said last year that it had signed a deal with the Russian space agency for three commercial passengers to book seats to the ISS per year as Russia plans to increase the number of Soyuz flights.

The last space tourist was Laliberte, who returned to Earth in October 2009 after an 11-day flight.

The first space tourist, Denis Tito, travelled to the ISS in 2001. All together, seven space tourists have taken part in missions.

Laliberte did not reveal the cost of his ticket, but his predecessor, US software pioneer Charles Simonyi, paid \$35 million for his trip.

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