

Dutch reality show seeks one-way astronauts for Mars

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Mars One CEO Bas Lansdorp holds a press conference to announce the launch of astronaut selection for a Mars space mission project, in New York, April 22, 2013.

Are you crazy enough to sign up for a one-way trip to Mars?
Applications are now being accepted by the makers of a Dutch reality show that says it will deliver the first humans to the Red Planet in 10 years.

The main requirements are strong health, good people and survival skills, being 18 or older, and having a reasonable grasp of the English language.

The non-profit company, called "Mars One," aims to land its first four astronauts in 2023 for a televised reality show that would follow the exploits of the first humans to attempt to establish a colony on Mars.

A range of potential pitfalls might prevent the project from becoming a reality, including the inability to return to Earth, the small living quarters and the lack of food and water on Mars.

Assuming of course, that radiation endured during the trip is not lethal, and that any spacecraft is able to negotiate a volatile landing onto the harsh Martian landscape.

Nevertheless, Mars One founder Bas Lansdorp told a New York press conference on Monday that organizers had received 10,000 messages from prospective applicants in over 100 different countries in the past year.

In all Mars One is seeking six groups of four people each. A new quartet would make the seven-month journey every two years after the first crew departs in 2022.

Lansdorp said the plan is to use technology and equipment from those who have already made it, and not to start from scratch. A series of rovers would be sent to Mars first before the human mission would be attempted.

The overall cost for the first manned mission is about six billion dollars, he said.

"It sounds like a lot of money. And actually it is a lot of money. But

imagine what will happen when the first people land on Mars. Literally everybody on the globe will want to see it," Lansdorp said.

The project has garnered plenty of skeptics but is backed by Dutch Nobel laureate Gerard 't Hooft, who won the 1999 prize for physics.

The world's space agencies have only managed to send unmanned robotic rovers to Mars so far, the latest being NASA's \$2.5 billion Curiosity rover which touched down in August 2012.

Key attributes for applicants, according to Mars One medical director Norbert Kraft, are being adaptable, resilient, creative and having empathy.

"Can you really work with other people from other countries, as a team?" he asked.

Many questions remain about how the astronauts would survive on a planet with a temperature of minus 55 degrees C (minus 67 F) and whose atmosphere consists mainly of carbon dioxide.

But the company's representatives insisted that their mission is ethically sound.

"The long term aim is to have a lasting colony," said Hooft. "This expansion will not be easy," he added. "How soon that will be accomplished is anyone's guess."

The deadline for the first round of online applications is August 31. The application fee differs by country; from the United States it costs \$38.

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