

Company successfully tests space-tourism balloon (Update)

June 24 2014, by Jeri Clausing



This artist rendering provided by World View Enterprises shows the World View Voyager pressurized space capsule that will be transported to the edge of space. The Arizona company says it has successfully completed the first scale test flight of a high-altitude balloon and capsule being developed to take tourists to the edge of space. World View Enterprises of Tucson said Tuesday June 24, 2014 that it launched the flight last week from Roswell, N.M. CEO Jane Poynter says the system broke the world record for highest parafoil flight, lifting a payload one-tenth of what is planned for passenger flight to 120,000 feet. (AP Photo/World View Enterprises)

An Arizona company said Tuesday it has successfully completed the first

small-scale test flight of a high-altitude balloon and capsule being developed to let tourists float 20 miles (32 kilometers) above the earth.

World View Enterprises of Tucson said it launched the flight last week from Roswell, New Mexico.

CEO Jane Poynter said the system broke the world record for highest parafoil flight, lifting a payload to 120,000 feet (36,576 meters).

"It went really, really, really well," Poynter said. "Actually, the guys hit the ball out of the park. We're thrilled."

The system uses a balloon similar to that used in 2012 to lift Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner 128,000 feet (39,014 meters) to make a world-record breaking 24-mile (38.62-kilometer) sky dive. That flight also launched from the Roswell airport.

Poynter said that last week's flight was the first testing all the components together. It used a balloon about third the size of that planned for passenger flight to lift a payload of about one-tenth of what will be used to carry passengers.

The company is still planning to begin its \$75,000 per-person flights in 2016, she said. The balloons will lift a capsule carrying six passengers and two crew members 20 miles (32 kilometers) up, where they will float under a parafoil for about two hours before floating back down to earth. The capsule will be big enough for the passengers to walk around.



This artist rendering provided by World View Enterprises shows the World View Voyager balloon carrying a pressurized space capsule that will be transported to the edge of space. The Arizona company says it has successfully completed the first scale test flight of a high-altitude balloon and capsule being developed to take tourists to the edge of space. World View Enterprises of Tucson said Tuesday June 24, 2014 that it launched the flight last week from Roswell, NM. CEO Jane Poynter says the system broke the world record for highest parafoil flight, lifting a payload one-tenth of what is planned for passenger flight to 120,000 feet. (AP Photo/World View Enterprises)

The selling point is the view of the Earth and seeing its curve, the company says. Other space-tourism ventures under development will rocket passengers the full 62 miles (100 kilometers) into space but on much shorter flights.

In filings with the Federal Aviation Administration, World View said it planned to launch its flights from Spaceport America in New Mexico. But Poynter Tuesday said that no final decision has been made on where

to base the flights.

Spaceport is where Virgin Galactic plans to launch its first space-tourism flights at a cost of \$200,000 per person. Development of Virgin's spacecraft has taken longer than originally planned, and it is unclear when the company, founded by British billionaire Richard Branson, will make its first flight. The company's newest target date is the end of this year, but it has said that for each of the last several years.



This photo taken on June 18, 2014, and provided by World View Enterprises, shows the World View team filling a high altitude balloon in Roswell, N.M., for the Voyager pressurized space capsule that will be transported to the edge of space. The Arizona company says it has successfully completed the first scale test flight of a high-altitude balloon and capsule being developed to take tourists

to the edge of space. World View Enterprises of Tucson said Tuesday June 24, 2014 that it launched the flight last week from Roswell, NM. CEO Jane Poynter says the system broke the world record for highest parafoil flight, lifting a payload one-tenth of what is planned for passenger flight to 120,000 feet. (AP Photo//World View Enterprises, J. Martin Harris)

"I don't think anyone considers us in a race," Poynter said when asked if they might beat Virgin Galactic to passenger flight. "We don't consider us in competition because the experience is so completely different."

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