

# Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Flying car to go on sale

April 20 2017, by Milos Krivokapic And Angela Charlton

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AeroMobil display their latest prototype of a flying car, in Monaco, Thursday, April 20, 2017. The light frame plane whose wings can fold back, like an insect is boosted by a rear propeller. The company says it is planning to accept first preorders for the vehicle as soon as later this year. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)

It may not be quite like the Jetsons, but for over a million dollars you too can soon fly around in a car.

A Slovakian company called AeroMobil unveiled on Thursday its version of a flying car, a light-framed plane whose wings can fold back, like an insect, and is boosted by a hybrid engine and rear propeller.

It will be available to preorder as soon as this year but is not for everyone: besides the big price tag—between 1.2 million and 1.5 million euros (\$1.3 million-\$1.6 million)—you'd need a pilot's license to use it in the air.

"I think it's going to be a very niche product," said Philip Mawby, professor of electronic engineering and head of research at the University of Warwick.

Several companies are working on flying cars, either like Aeromobil's two-seater that needs a runway, or others that function more like helicopters, lifting off vertically. But not many companies are seriously looking at marketing these vehicles anytime soon, Mawby said.

"The technology is there... The question is bringing it to the market at an affordable cost, and making it a useful product."

Among the big questions is how to control the air traffic if there are hundreds of such vehicles zipping through the air. There is no control except for traditional aircraft, notes Mawby.



Prince Albert II of Monaco, right, and Juraj Vaculik, CEO and co-founder of AeroMobil, applaud after unveiling the latest prototype of a flying car, in Monaco, Thursday, April 20, 2017. The light frame plane whose wings can fold back, like an insect is boosted by a rear propeller. The company says it is planning to accept first preorders for the vehicle as soon as later this year. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)

So while vehicles like the AeroMobil could be used for recreational purposes by people who have a large piece of land, flying cars are unlikely to become a mass market reality anytime soon, he says.

The AeroMobil has a driving range of about 700 kms (435 miles) and a top speed of 160 kph (99 mph). When flying, its maximum cruising range is 750 kms (466 miles), and it takes about three minutes for the car to transform into a plane.

"You can use it as a regular car," said Juraj Vaculik, co-founder and CEO of AeroMobil, at the unveiling in Monaco. Though it is not legal —yet—to take off from a highway.

The previous AeroMobil 3.0 prototype made news in 2014 when it was presented in Vienna, but no test-flight took place then. It crashed during a test flight in Slovakia in 2015 with its inventor Stefan Klein on board. He escaped largely unharmed.



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AeroMobil display a rear view of their latest prototype of a flying car, in Monaco, Thursday, April 20, 2017. The light frame plane whose wings can fold back, like an insect is boosted by a rear propeller. The company says it is planning to accept first preorders for the vehicle as soon as later this year. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)



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