

Branson says Virgin Galactic to launch space flight 'within weeks'

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The billionaire entrepreneur said his Virgin Galactic was 'more than tantalisingly close' to launching its first mission to space

British entrepreneur Richard Branson said he expects his Virgin Galactic company to conduct its first space flight "within weeks, not months" in

comments broadcast Tuesday.

Speaking to CNBC in Singapore, the billionaire Virgin founder said the company was "more than tantalisingly close" to launching its first mission to space, and that he himself hoped to briefly leave Earth within "months not years."

"We will be in space with people not too long after that," he added.

Branson's Virgin Galactic is racing against Amazon creator Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin to launch the first out-of-this-world passenger flight and take paying passengers into space.

Both companies will offer customers a weightless experience that will last just minutes, passing through the imaginary line marking where space begins—either the Karman line, at 100 kilometres (62 miles), or the 50-mile boundary recognised by the US Air Force.

At this altitude, the sky looks dark and the curvature of the Earth can be seen clearly.

The first space tourists, who visited the International Space Station (ISS) in the 2000s, paid tens of millions of dollars for the privilege.

Branson said the proposed \$250,000 price tag of a Virgin Galactic ticket would allow those who dreamed of visiting space to lift off in larger numbers.

"If I have a room full of 10 people, eight out of 10 would love to go to space if they could afford it," he said.

"Ultimately," Branson said he hoped the price of a [space flight](#) would come down to around \$40,000 or \$50,000 over the next decade."

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