

Virgin Galactic says it'll fly Italian air force researchers

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Virgin Galactic says it has been contracted by the Italian air force for a suborbital research flight aboard its winged rocket ship.

The [company](#) announced Wednesday that the mission will be flown as early as next year, carrying three Italian specialists who will tend to the experiments while the craft is in space.

Virgin Galactic is best known for its plans to carry tourists into the lower fringes of space to experience weightlessness and view the Earth far below.

But its spaceships also are designed to carry experiments that require several minutes of microgravity.

Virgin Galactic crews have reached space on [test flights](#) over California, and the company recently moved staff to Spaceport America in New Mexico to begin commercial launches.

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