

# Virgin Galactic's next spaceship reaches build milestone

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This photo released by Virgin Galactic Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2020, shows Virgin Galactic's next passenger spaceship standing on its landing gear in what is known as a weight-on-wheels test, in a hangar at the company's Mojave Air & Space Port in Mojave, Calif. Continuing work on the new ship includes connecting flight control and other integrated systems. The company anticipates commercial flights this year at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico. (Thomas Storesund/Virgin Galactic via AP)

Virgin Galactic's next passenger spaceship has reached a major construction milestone, the company said Wednesday.

All major structural elements have been assembled and the [rocket plane](#) is standing on its own landing gear at Mojave Air & Space Port in California, Virgin Galactic said in a statement.

Photos of the "Weight on Wheels" achievement show the craft in a hangar next to the Virgin Space Ship Unity spacecraft, which has been to [space](#) twice during [test flights](#) in preparation for commercial operations based at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico.

"We now have two spaceships which are structurally complete, with our third making good progress," CEO George Whitesides said. "These spaceships are destined to provide thousands of private astronauts with a truly transformative experience by performing regular trips to space."

Continuing work on the new ship includes connecting flight control and other integrated systems.

The company has not set a date for the start of commercial operations but has said it anticipates doing so in 2020.

It has moved more than 130 employees to New Mexico and late last year inaugurated a program to prepare its first customers for the experience.



This photo released by Virgin Galactic Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2020, shows Virgin Galactic's next passenger spaceship, at right, standing on its landing gear in what is known as a weight-on-wheels test, next to the Virgin Space Ship Unity spacecraft that has already been to space, in a hangar at the company's Mojave Air & Space Port in Mojave, Calif. Continuing work on the new ship includes connecting flight control and other integrated systems. The company anticipates commercial flights this year at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico. (Thomas Storesund/Virgin Galactic via AP)

The winged rocket ships are designed to carry paying tourists to the lower fringes of space to experience weightlessness, view the Earth far below and glide to a landing on a runway.

The craft also will carry experiments that require several minutes of microgravity.

Founded by British billionaire Richard Branson, the [company](#) is now

formally named Virgin Galactic Holdings Inc. and went public on the New York Stock Exchange in October.

The fleet is being manufactured by The Spaceship Company, a wholly owned subsidiary.

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