

SpaceX announces partnership to send tourists to ISS

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SpaceX on Thursday announced a partnership to send three tourists to

the International Space Station (ISS), the first private trip in more than a decade.

Elon Musk's company has signed a deal with Axiom Space to transport the tourists along with a commander on one of its Crew Dragon capsules in the second half of 2021.

Axiom CEO Michael Suffredini said the flight "will represent a watershed moment in the march toward universal and routine access to space." He did not reveal a price tag.

The cost of launching a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is around \$60 million and, throwing in the cost attached to building a new capsule, the project [price tag](#) could exceed \$100 million.

Each ticket is therefore likely to cost tens of millions of dollars.

Eight space tourists have so far gone to the ISS on Russian Soyuz rockets with the company Space Adventures.

The first was Dennis Tito, who paid \$20 million for an eight-hour stay on the ISS back in 2001. The last to go was Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte, in 2009.

Last month, SpaceX announced a partnership with Space Adventures to send four tourists deeper into orbit than any private citizen before them.

This mission is also projected for late 2021 at the earliest, but more likely 2022.

Other companies involved in space tourism are Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin.

The two are developing vessels to send tourists just beyond the border of space (80 kilometers or 100 kilometers—up to 62 miles—depending on how each defines it).

Tickets for Virgin started at \$250,000 when they first went on sale in the mid-2000s.

SpaceX's offering is far more ambitious and powered by the same reusable Falcon 9 rocket that puts satellites into space and sends astronauts to the ISS.

At the same time, Boeing is also developing a crew capsule called Starliner, also with the intention of transporting US astronauts to the ISS.

Like SpaceX, Boeing envisages sending tourists into space, but the program's development is hampered by major glitches that resulted in the early termination of an uncrewed test flight in December.

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