

Space tourism: new test flight planned for Virgin Galactic

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A model of SpaceShipTwo—which is designed to take tourists into Space

Space tourism company Virgin Galactic said Monday it planned a new test flight for its SpaceShipTwo craft this month after an aborted test in early December.

"The flight window will open on February 13 with opportunities to fly throughout February, pending good weather conditions and technical readiness," Richard Branson's company said.

"Pre-flight preparations are already underway at Spaceport America, New Mexico."

It added the flight would test remedial work completed since the December test when the onboard computer halted ignition of the rocket motor.

SpaceShipTwo had been expected to take its first passengers into space later this year.

So far, 600 people who have paid up to \$250,000—Virgin Galactic calls them "future astronauts"—have been waiting for years to take their seat.

SpaceShipTwo's development was delayed by a devastating crash of the first one in 2014 due to a pilot error.

When fully functional, the spacecraft will be taken up by a special plane and released at high altitude. Seconds later, the spaceship—part plane, part rocket—will ignite its engine and blast upward.

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