

# How can you become a space tourist?

July 18 2021, by Lucie Aubourg

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British billionaire Richard Branson experiences weightlessness aboard a Virgin Galactic spacecraft.

Thrill-seekers might soon be able to get their adrenaline kicks—and envy-inducing Instagram snaps—from the final frontier, as space tourism finally lifts off.

All you'll need is a bit of patience. And a lot of money.

Here's a rundown of where things stand.

## **Who's offering spaceflights?**

Two companies are offering short "suborbital" hops of a few minutes: Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic, founded by Richard Branson.

Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket takes off vertically and the crew capsule detaches and crosses the Karman line (62 miles, or 100 kilometers, in altitude), before falling back to Earth with three parachutes.

Virgin Galactic uses a massive carrier plane, which takes off from a horizontal runway then drops a rocket-powered spaceplane. This in turn soars to over 50 miles altitude before gliding back.

In both cases, up to six passengers are able to unbuckle from their seats to experience a few minutes of weightlessness and take in the view of Earth from space.

## **When can you go?**

Virgin Galactic has said regular commercial flights will begin from 2022, following two more [test flights](#). Their waiting list is already long, with 600 tickets so far sold.

But the company predicts it will eventually run up to 400 flights per year. Two seats on one of the first flights are up for grabs in a prize draw: registrations are open until September 1.

As for Blue Origin, no detailed calendar has been announced.

"We're planning for two more flights this year, then targeting many more in 2022," a spokesperson told AFP.

Another way to get to space is via reality television. Space Hero, an upcoming show, says it plans to send the winner of a competition to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2023.

## **How much will it cost?**

The first tickets sold by Virgin Galactic went for between \$200,000 and \$250,000 each, but the company has warned that the cost for future sales will go up.

Blue Origin hasn't announced prices. The anonymous winner of a public auction for a seat on the first crewed flight paid \$28 million, but decided to defer their trip.

It's not known what amount was bid for the seat secured by Dutch teen Oliver Daemen, who will fly in the auction winner's place.

The more "budget conscious" might consider spending \$125,000 for a seat on Space Neptune: a capsule that offers 360 degree windows and is lifted to the [upper atmosphere](#) by a balloon the size of a football stadium.

Despite the promise of spectacular views, the balloon ascends only 19 miles—far from the boundary of space, and weightlessness.

The 300 seats for 2024 have all been sold, but reservations are open for 2025.

## **Are the physical requirements tough?**

No—you're only expected to be in reasonable shape. Virgin Galactic's training lasts just five days.

Blue Origin promises to teach you everything you need to know "the day before you launch," and its first crewed flight includes pioneering aviator Wally Funk, who at 82 will become the oldest astronaut.

The company's requirements include being able to climb seven flights of stairs in under 90 seconds (the height of the launch tower) and being between 5'0" and 110 pounds (152 centimeters and 50 kilograms) and 6'4" and 223 pounds (193 cm and 100 kg).

## What about SpaceX?

Elon Musk's company is also getting into the [space tourism](#) game, but its plans involve journeys that are far longer. The costs are also predicted to be astronomical—tens of millions of dollars.

In September, American billionaire Jared Isaacman has chartered a mission called Inspiration4 to take him and three other passengers into orbit around the Earth on a SpaceX Crew Dragon, launched into [space](#) by a Falcon 9 rocket.

Then in January 2022, three businessmen will travel to the ISS with an experienced astronaut. The mission, named Ax-1, is being organized by the company Axiom Space, which has signed up for three other future flights with SpaceX.

Elon Musk's company is also planning a trip to orbit for four people, organized by intermediary Space Adventures—the same company in charge of the [flight](#) of the Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa to the ISS in December, aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket.

Maezawa is also supposed to take a trip around the Moon in 2023, this time aboard a rocket that is still under development by SpaceX, called Starship.

He invited eight members of the public to join him—but applications are now closed.

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