

# Blue Origin launches its fourth crew to final frontier

March 31 2022

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The New Shepard suborbital rocket blasted off from the company's Launch Site One base in west Texas at 8:58 am local time (1358 GMT) with six crew.

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin successfully carried out its fourth crewed spaceflight Thursday, a ten-minute ride beyond the planet's atmosphere and back again.

The New Shepard suborbital rocket blasted off from the company's Launch Site One base in west Texas at 8:58 am local time (1358 GMT) with six crew members.

The crew included Gary Lai, chief architect of the New Shepard program, plus five paying customers—though the ticket price hasn't been disclosed.

"I felt my skin pulling taut," Lai said, of the rocket ride.

Lai's inclusion came after comedian Pete Davidson, the boyfriend of reality star Kim Kardashian, canceled his participation without disclosing a reason.

After launch, the reusable, zero greenhouse gas emissions rocket landed vertically at a pad, while the capsule continued soaring, crossing the Karman line that marks the start of space, 100 kilometers (62 miles) high.

Passengers unbuckled and enjoyed a few minutes of weightlessness, taking in the majesty of Earth before the capsule re-entered the atmosphere, deployed its chutes and floated to the surface for a gentle desert landing.

Blue Origin's past flights have included its founder Bezos as well as Star Trek icon William Shatner.

After years of promise, the space tourism sector is finally taking off.

Lai told reporters the company was continuing to make improvements to the vehicle "under the hood" aimed at pushing down costs and reducing the time between flights.

"Someday you're going to see us launching every single week," he said.

Elon Musk's SpaceX is targeting next week to fly three tycoons and a former astronaut to the International Space Station on the Axiom-1

mission—though the crew involved insist they're doing serious research work rather than going on vacation.

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Citation: Blue Origin launches its fourth crew to final frontier (2022, March 31) retrieved 2 October 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-03-blue-fourth-crew-frontier.html>

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