

# Virgin Galactic's next spaceflight will include sweepstakes winners

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This still image from a Virgin Galactic video shows the Galactic 01 mission spacecraft launching the first commercial flight from Spaceport City in New Mexico; Virgin Galactic's next spaceflight will include a mother-daughter duo from the Caribbean.

Virgin Galactic's next spaceflight will include a mother-daughter duo from the Caribbean who won their tickets in a sweepstakes contest, as well as an 80-year-old former Olympian.

The company founded by British billionaire Richard Branson flew its first paying customers, members of the Italian Air Force, last month—a long awaited achievement that put it back on track in the emerging private spaceflight sector.

Its next mission "Galactic 02," is planned for August 10 from Spaceport America, New Mexico, the company said in a statement.

On board will be Keisha Schahaff, a health coach from Antigua and Barbuda, who won a contest that raised \$1.7 million for the non-profit Space for Humanity, which aims to widen space access.

"I always was interested in space as a little girl," she told AFP in an interview in 2021. "This is a great opportunity for me to feel alive and to just make the greatest adventure ever."

She will be joined by her daughter Anastatia Mayers, an 18-year-old student at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, who is studying philosophy and physics. They will be the first mother-daughter duo to fly to space.

Also on board will be Jon Goodwin, an 80-year-old adventurer who competed in the 1972 Olympic games as a canoeist for Britain. Goodwin was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2014 and will be the second person with the condition to travel to space.

Virgin Galactic's spaceflights involve a giant, twin-fuselage carrier aircraft that takes off from a runway, gains altitude, then drops a rocket-powered spaceplane that soars into space with the ticket-holders.

The passengers experience a few minutes of weightlessness at around 53 miles (85 kilometers) above sea level, before the spaceplane glides back to Earth.

Founded in 2004, Virgin Galactic has sold around 800 tickets for seats on future commercial flights—600 between 2005 and 2014 for \$200,000 to \$250,000, and 200 since then for \$450,000 each.

Virgin Galactic competes in the "suborbital" space tourism sector with billionaire Jeff Bezos's company, Blue Origin, which has already sent 32 people into space using a vertical lift-off rocket.

But since an accident in September 2022 during an unmanned flight, Blue Origin's rocket has been grounded. The company promised in March to resume spaceflight soon.

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