

Virgin Galactic carries first Pakistani into space

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Namira Salim during a press conference in Islamabad in 2006.

Adventurer Namira Salim became the first Pakistani to travel into space on Friday, riding aboard Virgin Galactic's fifth successful flight in five months, the US company announced.

Salim, who previously traveled to both poles and has also parachuted over Mount Everest, was among the first customers to buy a ticket with billionaire Richard Branson's space company after it was founded almost two decades ago.

"I love my title 'first Pakistani astronaut,' it's like being a very special princess of the country. Maybe nicer than being a princess," Salim told AFP back in 2012.

Virgin Galactic said Salim is also a resident of Monaco and the United Arab Emirates.

That makes her the first person from Monaco and the first Emirati woman to travel to space, the company said.

American Ron Rosano and Briton Trevor Beattie were also [passengers](#) on Friday's trip, dubbed "Galactic 04."

Beth Moses, a Virgin Galactic employee, and two pilots were also aboard.

Unlike traditional vertical launches into space, Virgin Galactic utilizes a specialized, twin-fuselage aircraft to carry the passenger vessel high in the sky.

The mothership then releases the spaceplane, which in turn engages its thrusters to soar into space at speeds approaching Mach-3.

Passengers experience a few minutes of weightlessness, where they are free to perform somersaults and gaze out the window at the curvature of the Earth.

The craft then glided back down, landing just over an hour after takeoff

from Spaceport in New Mexico.

Virgin Galactic competes in the "suborbital" space tourism sector with billionaire Jeff Bezos's company Blue Origin, which has already sent 31 people into [space](#) using a vertical liftoff rocket.

But since an accident in September 2022 during an unmanned flight, Blue Origin's rocket has been grounded. The investigation into the accident was closed at the end of September by the US aviation regulator, which requested the company make changes before its flights can resume.

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