



Oct. 17, 2011

Virgin Galactic at a Glance

Who: [Virgin Galactic](#), the world's first commercial spaceline.

Vision: Virgin Galactic will provide space access to paying tourism passengers and scientists for research with a smaller environmental impact, lower cost and greater flexibility than any other spaceflight organization, past or present. Once operational, Virgin Galactic aims to fly 500 people in the first year and 30,000 individuals within 10 years.

Suborbital Tourism

Experience: Through the Virgin Galactic space experience, passengers will be able to leave their seats for several minutes and float in zero-gravity, while enjoying astounding views of space and the Earth stretching approximately 1,000 miles in every direction. Prior to the flight, passengers will go through three days of preparation, medical checks, bonding and G-force acclimatization, all of which is included in the price of the flight.

Science/Research/ Education

Experience: Virgin Galactic will also host flights dedicated to science, education and research. The vehicles are being built to carry six customers, or the equivalent scientific research payload. The trip into suborbital space offers a unique microgravity platform for researchers.

Owners: Sir Richard Branson's [Virgin Group](#) and [Aabar Investments PJS](#)

History: The 2004 [Ansari X Prize](#) called for private sector innovations in the field of manned space exploration. Specifically, participants had to privately fund, design and manufacture a vehicle that could deliver the weight of three people (including one actual person) to suborbital space (altitude of 100 kms). The vehicle had to be 80 percent reusable and fly twice within a two-week period.

Mojave Aerospace Ventures, a Paul G. Allen company, and Burt Rutan's [Scaled Composites](#) pursued the X Prize with Rutan's [SpaceShipOne](#), an air-launched all composite rocket ship. The [Virgin Group](#) sponsored SpaceShipOne's X Prize flights. In October 2004, SpaceShipOne with pilot Brian Binnie won the X Prize.

With this success, the Virgin Group licensed Mojave Aerospace Ventures' technology and invested in the development of a second-generation vehicle for commercial ventures. Virgin Galactic was born.

Seeing space tourism as a reality, early adopters began making reservations to buy tickets for suborbital flights, providing vital, tangible proof of an available market. To date, more than 85,000 people from 125 countries have expressed interest in experiencing a flight and becoming a Virgin Galactic astronaut.

Vehicles: Virgin Galactic has developed two types of vehicles, both of which were designed by Scaled Composites:

- [SpaceShipTwo \(SS2, VSS Enterprise\)](#) – SS2 uses much of the same technology, construction and design of SpaceShipOne, but is twice the size and will carry six passengers and two pilots. It was unveiled in December 2009, and test flights began in March 2010.
- [WhiteKnightTwo \(WK2, VMS Eve\)](#) – WK2 is the carrier aircraft for SpaceShipTwo and a training vehicle for SS2 spaceflight. It is the largest, 100 percent carbon composite carrier craft in service. It made its first flight in December 2008.
- *Note: SpaceShipOne is now permanently displayed in the [Milestones of Flight Gallery](#) at the [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#).*

Flight Cost: A Virgin Galactic suborbital tourism flight costs \$200,000. To date, the company has accepted more than \$57 million in deposits from more than 450 individuals. Deposits range from \$20,000 to \$200,000. A specialist network of 140 [Virgin Galactic Accredited Space Agents](#) has been set up around the world to provide a localized reservation service.

Launch

Date: The VSS *Enterprise* and VMS *Eve* test flight program is well under way. Virgin Galactic will officially launch with paying passengers once it believes it is safe to do so and has received all regulatory approvals.

Operational

Partners: [The Spaceship Company \(TSC\)](#), a joint venture of Virgin Galactic and Scaled Composites, is under contract to manufacture five SS2s and three WK2 carriers. TSC's [Final Assembly, Integration and Test Hangar \(FAITH\)](#) at the [Mojave Air and Space Port](#) will support the final stages of production, as implied by its name, and major return-to-base vehicle maintenance. FAITH opened in September 2011.

[New Mexico Spaceport Authority](#) (NMSA) funded the world's first purpose-built spaceport complete with a 10,000-foot runway. Located in Las Cruces, N.M., the \$235 million Spaceport America serves as Virgin Galactic's headquarters and base of operations. The "Virgin Galactic Gateway to Space" was designed by [Foster +Partners](#), [URS Corporation](#) and New Mexico firm [SMPC Architects](#). The facility was dedicated in October 2011.

Workforce: Approximately 130 dedicated staff

Leadership: CEO and President [George Whitesides](#)
 Commercial Director [Stephen Attenborough](#)
 Director, Operations and Projects [Jonathan Firth](#)
 Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer [Steve Isakowitz](#)
 Vice President of Operations [Mike Moses](#)

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