

SPACE TRAVEL, ANYONE?



FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT FOR THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME! SPACE travel is no longer a fantasy in George Lucas movies—it is now an attainable reality for adventurous folks who can spare \$250,000 on Virgin Galactic or book a flight with Space Expedition Corporation at \$95,000 that seems to be a bargain (round trip!).

Recently I attended the closing session of the Aspen Institute Idea Festival, which featured Sir Richard Branson who presented his new concept, Virgin Galactic space travel where he revealed Tom and Margo Pritzker of Hyatt Hotels family and Richard Blum, Senator Diane Feinstein’s financier husband signed up for the trip, among other notable supporters.

Earlier this year, I attended the Space Expedition Corporation’s Silicon Valley presentation at the Woodside residence of Honorary Consul General of The Czech Republic Richard Pivnicka and Barbara Pivnicka, Honorary Consul Of The Slovak Republic. Space Expedition has partnered with Vikram Veerapaneni, Founder and President of SaaVee, Inc.—a cloud-computing expert and Silicon Valley supporter of Space Expedition Corp. This event was studded with local investors and engineers from Google and other Silicon Valley firms and space enthusiasts.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF IGOR CAPABARIBE



Below is your brief flight information:

XCOR AEROSPACE

XCOR Chief Operating Officer Andrew Nelson's Lynx space ship will take off and land from the spaceport in Mojave Desert and Curacao after the passengers take a routine medical check-up and training. There are only one passenger and one pilot-- so, two Astronauts-- in each flight for the trip beyond the Earth's atmosphere for 6 minutes, and they get unobstructed views of the Earth through Lynx's large glass canopy.

The whole trip takes about an hour and Lynx takes off and lands like a plane with an unique system that controls the rocket engines without the disposable carrier and the rockets or landing at sea. The Space Expedition Corp (SXC) will have two spacecrafts built by XCOR--Lynx Mark I and Lynx Mark II. Space Expedition Corp. CEO Michael Mol was the first one to purchase a ticket for Virgin Galactic to check out the competition before he invested in Space Expedition Corporation.



VIRGIN GALACTIC

If you choose to fly Virgin Galactic, a seat on the spaceship will cost \$250,000. Once a reservation is confirmed with payments, you will join the Virgin's 600 future astronauts, which has become one of the most exclusive clubs in the world.

After 2 days of flight preparation and meeting with your crew and other passengers, you're suited up and raring to go. The climb to 50,000ft is marked with quiet contemplation but there's an air of confidence and eager anticipation. With awe-inspiring power, the spaceship accelerates to around 3000 mph or nearly 4 times the speed of sound.

Then the countdown to release, a brief moment of quiet before a wave of unimaginable but controlled power surges through the craft. You are instantly pinned back into your seat, overwhelmed but enthralled by the howl of the rocket motor and the eye-watering acceleration, which, as you watch the read-out, has you traveling in a matter of seconds, at almost 3000mph, nearly 4 times the speed of sound.

After lift-off, you're back to your reclined seat and gravity is starting to return. The deceleration produces strong G forces, but you're lying down to ease the intensity. You feel the feathered wings of the spacecraft producing a powerful drag as the thickness of the atmosphere increases, although out of the windows it still looks like space.

Other benefits are priority access to a variety of Virgin Galactic events including visited Richard Branson's Necker Island home with none other than Sir Branson himself, a G-force training, and celebrated milestone power test flights in the Mojave Desert.



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1. XCOR Rocket Ship
2. Joseph Pistrutto, Google Director and XCOR investor, Jorge Jaramillo, California Governor's Office for Business and Development, Stephen James, Principal, KPMG
3. Richard and Barbara Pivnicka.
4. Virgin Galactic space craft
5. Richard Bronson and his space craft with carrier
6. Vikram Veerapaneni and Suzanne Saunders Shaw, CBS News