



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Virgin Galactic to Renew Spaceplane Flights

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Virgin Galactic has completed improvements to its VSS Unity spaceplane. The company plans to restart a passenger flight program this year, the company said Tuesday.

Virgin Galactic suspended flights of the Unity and its carrier plane, the VMS Eve, in 2021 to work on the craft. The VSS Unity launches from the surface of the Eve after that plane carries the spacecraft up.

Virgin Galactic was founded in 2004 by billionaire Richard Branson.

Virgin Galactic chief Michael Colglazier said the company's goal for the near future is to safely provide flights on a usual basis. The company wants to give both researchers and space tourists "an **unrivaled** experience," he said.

In February, Galactic made the first test flight of its carrier plane since 2021. The company is planning "two or three" test flights before any passenger transports, Colglazier said. The first flight will center on research for the Italian Air Force.

The company hopes to do monthly flights after that to serve the 800 customers who have already purchased trips on the spaceplane.

In February, Galactic re-opened ticket sales to the public. The cost of a flight is about \$450,000 per person.

The spaceplane is to fly passengers about 80 kilometers above Earth where they will spend about 10 minutes in low gravity. The spaceplane will then return home, landing in a way similar to that of a traditional airplane.

The VMS Unity and its carrier plane take off and land in the state of New Mexico. In 2014, a Virgin Galactic passenger spaceship broke up during a test flight, killing one pilot and badly injuring another.

I'm Andrew Smith.

Words in This Story

unrivaled -*adj.* without equal and of superior quality

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