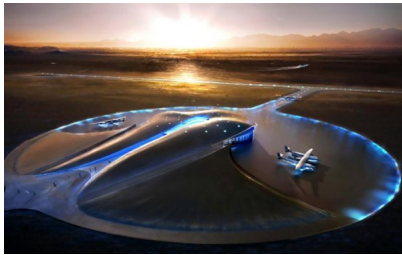


READY FOR SPACE - VISITING SPACEPORT AMERICA



New Mexico has been attracting considerable attention recently; not only is Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic preparing to launch its first commercial flight to the sub-orbit from there, but Spaceport America which is to be used by Virgin has just opened to the public.

Flying to space may have seemed like a utopian idea of Jules Verne and his likes, however, the last few decades have proved all skeptics wrong. We traveled around the orbit and landed on the moon, sent probes and satellites to space and launched many ambitious space research projects.

One, which is rather groundbreaking, was introduced by Virgin Galactic owner, Richard Branson. He envisaged offering trips to the orbit to 'the commoner' and not long after he revealed his plan. Now, it is becoming reality.

While the passengers need to wait for a couple of more years, those interested in the topic now have a unique opportunity to explore the spaceport. It is located in New Mexico and has recently launched tours for space enthusiasts.

Spaceport America is the world's first commercial gateway to space; currently still under construction, it will serve its purpose in 2013, when the first commercial flight to space is due to take place. Even if it has not been finished, its cutting edge design is a bit of a spectacle already.

A tour company located in nearby Albuquerque runs tours three days a week, Fridays to Sundays. **The three-hour tour not only takes the visitors around the site, but also reveals details from history of transportation in the region across the ages**, charging \$59 for an adult ticket, \$29 per child under 12 years. Even if the tours are not exactly flights to space, they are a tasty little flavor of what the very near future will be like.

Spaceport has been a very welcomed asset for the State of New Mexico, creating not only 500 construction jobs, all available for locals, but also, creating a great number of permanent positions once fully operational.

Also, as the passenger waiting list for the \$200,000 Virgin Galactic space flights is growing long, hospitality tourism in the vicinity of Spaceport America is likely to bloom very soon.

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