

VIRGIN GALACTIC DOWNSIZES ITS SPACE TOURISM SUBORBITAL PROGRAM



Virgin Galactic has announced that it will reduce the frequency of VSS Unity flights after completing five successful commercial space tourism flights. The company wants to focus on developing a new project.

On November 2nd, Virgin Galactic successfully completed its fifth suborbital flight, carrying four space tourists (Colin Bennett, Alan Stern, Kellie Gerardi, and Ketty Maisonrouge) to an altitude of 87.2 km. **As the frequency of commercial flights reached a monthly cruising pace, Virgin Galactic executives made a surprise announcement.**

The VSS Unity flights will now be spaced out at a rate of one per quarter. The next Galactic 06 flight will take off next January, while Galactic 07 will not take off until the beginning of the second quarter. The company is considering a Galactic 08, but it has not yet been confirmed. However, the Unity VSS will no longer fly from mid-2024, and 185 jobs related to this program will be eliminated, which accounts for 18% of the company's workforce. The move will save roughly \$25 million annually, the company said.

Virgin Galactic Downsizing

Virgin Galactic has recently announced that it will be reallocating its resources and personnel to focus on developing its new Delta suborbital spaceplane. The company justified this decision as the new spaceplane can fly twice a week and carry six passengers, unlike Unity, which can only carry four. Virgin Galactic also explained that the Delta spaceplane will generate 12 times more monthly revenue than its predecessor.

The Virgin Galactic CEO Michael Colglazier said that Unity's main flight goals are to demonstrate the company's system, showcase the astronaut experience, and provide insights for the Delta program. He also mentioned that the total cost of supporting Unity's flights exceeds the relatively modest monthly revenue. It's worth noting that a ticket for a flight on the VSS Unity costs €450,000.

Suborbital Space Tourism Flights to Resume in 2026

Virgin Galactic plans to prioritize passengers with research projects willing to pay a higher fare for their latest flights with Unity. **However, a limited number of seats will still be available for wealthy individuals who can afford to pay up to \$1 million for a few moments of weightlessness.**

Two Delta aircraft are in production, with test flights expected in 2025. If all goes according to plan, commercial flights will resume in 2026.

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