

# START-UPS TO OFFER BALLOON SPACE FLIGHTS



In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about space tourism, and the time has finally come for it to become a reality. Starting in 2024, low-cost space flights will be on offer to civilians. However, until now, only millionaires and billionaires have been able to afford this luxury, with the average price for a seat costing a staggering 25 million euros.

However, two companies, Space Perspective and World View, plan to make space flights more accessible by slashing the prices. **Their tickets will start at €45,000, which is still relatively expensive for a low-cost option but far more affordable than the millions charged by Space X or Blue Origin.** The companies have already developed their craft and will test uncrewed flights soon. If all goes well, they plan to offer the first commercial flights before the end of the year.

To make it clear, the trip won't involve a rocket but rather a giant hot-air balloon with a cabin accommodating up to ten passengers. The balloon can only ascend to the stratosphere, the edge of space. However, this altitude is enough to witness the earth's curvature, the dark space expanse, and the atmosphere's blue border. This experience will allow passengers to capture breathtaking photos.

## Weightlessness-free and More Accessible

The journey is expected to last six hours: two hours going up, two more observing the Great Wall of China or the Northern Lights from space, and two coming back down. However, you won't climb high enough to experience weightlessness, which is not necessarily bad. Reaching space requires excellent physical conditions and extensive astronaut training. On the other hand, a balloon ride makes it as accessible as taking a plane.

Space Perspective and World View are space specialists. The founder of Space Perspective also created Paragon Space, the company that provides most of the life support systems for human spaceflight. The current tests are crucial, as even the slightest accident could spell the end of space tourism.

## The Competition Is Raging

Other companies, like the French group Zephalto are also working on space flight projects. They are collaborating with CNES in Toulouse and aiming for human-crewed flights at an altitude of 25 kilometers. **The ticket for this journey lasting six hours is sold for 120,000 euros.** In addition to admiring the stars against a black background, travelers can enjoy meals and drinks.

Two French start-ups, Stratoflight and Expleo, jointly developed a capsule that can accommodate six people and will be lifted by a hydrogen balloon to an altitude of 35 km. Once the capsule reaches the desired height, tourists can enter a balcony to enjoy the panoramic view.

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