

# Richard Branson Reveals Virgin Galactic's Latest Launch Plans

The company's first astronauts could go into space 'in about four months.'

by Patrick Caughill, Futurism / Oct.20.2017 / 3:54 PM ET



Virgin Spaceship Unity (VSS Unity) glides for the first time after being released from Virgin Mothership Eve (VMS Eve) over the Mojave Desert on Dec. 3, 2016. [Virgin Galactic](#)

*In brief:* Richard Branson believes that Virgin Galactic will send its first astronauts into space within the next four months. He also suggested that Elon Musk's goal to get to Mars is not going to help the Earth as much as Virgin's plans.

## LAUNCH IMMINENT

Richard Branson, the founder of the [Virgin Group](#), which includes spaceflight company [Virgin Galactic](#), appeared on CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Wednesday to state that he expects the company to send its first astronauts into space "in about four months." This comes after a more optimistic statement by Virgin Galactic President [Mike Moses](#) at the [International Symposium for Personal and Commercial Spaceflight](#) last week. He said that he hopes for Virgin Galactic "to be in space by the end of this year."

Virgin Galactic's spacecraft, the VSS Unity, must first successfully navigate a series of test flights before the craft can make its way into outer space. However, it is likely that suborbital commercial tourism and research flights will come before the company ventures outside of the atmosphere.



Richard Branson in 2015. GLYN KIRK / AFP - Getty Images, File

Even then, due to the weight of the VSS Unity, flights will not go beyond the internationally recognized border of space, or Karaman line, which sits above 100 km

(62 mi). Instead, flights will travel above the United States Air Force's boundary of 80 km (50 mi).

## 'FIXATED ON MARS'

During his chat on CNBC, Branson said, "Space needs a lot of companies doing different things to benefit the earth back here." There is much humanity can learn from traveling and experimenting in space. But Branson believes his and Jeff Bezos's efforts with [Blue Origin](#) are more likely to do that than Elon Musk with SpaceX.

### Related

Elon Musk's Wild Idea  
For City-To-City Rockets  
Just Might Work

"Elon is absolutely fixated on going to Mars and I think it's his life mission," Branson said. "Jeff and ourselves [at the Virgin Group] are more interested in how we can use space to benefit the earth."

Of course, this is making a huge assumption that putting humans on Mars will not have benefits for Earth. In fact, traveling to other parts of the solar system will likely have a major impact on Earth in the form of [space mining](#), as well as the potential to make some truly unfathomable discoveries impossible on our own planet.