

To win the prize, a competitor had to reach space twice within two weeks carrying a pilot and a payload with the equivalent weight of two passengers. Taking just 81 minutes, X Prize judges declared that the rocket had climbed nearly 70 miles into the sky, surpassing an altitude record set by the U.S. Air Force X-15 winged rocket in the 1960s.

The prize is named after the experimental planes, including the X-15, that propelled the United States into the Space Age, and the Ansari family, Iranian-born technology entrepreneurs from Dallas who gave a multimillion-dollar contribution to support the competition.

So what next, well, Richard Branson is interested and Virgin Galactic is born.

“Virgin Galactic will own and operate privately built spaceships, modelled on the history-making SpaceShipOne craft. These spaceships will allow affordable sub-orbital space tourism for the first time in our history.” says Branson “We’ve always had a dream of developing a space tourism business and Paul Allen’s vision, combined with Burt Rutan’s technological brilliance, have brought that dream a step closer to reality. The deal with Mojave Aerospace

Ventures is just the start of what we believe will be a new era in the history of mankind, one day making the affordable exploration of space by human beings a real possibility.”

If you’ve got a \$100,000 to spend, check out the website at www.virgingalactic.com. The site declares: “The first flights by Virgin Galactic are planned to begin in 2.5 to 3 years time. We plan to begin taking deposits early next year and will contact prospective astronauts who register online. If you want to be one of those we contact, or simply want us to let you know what’s happening with the development of the Virgin Galactic space tourism programme, fill in the form...”



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