

\$28M was the price for a spare seat on space flight with Jeff Bezos

Sold! Bidder pays \$28M for spare seat on space flight with Jeff Bezos. Bids in 10-minute auction started at \$4.8M for 20 July trip on Blue Origin spacecraft with Bezos and his brother. The auction winner will join the Bezos brothers in a Blue Origin capsule for the flight next month.

Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin has sold the spare seat of the company's 20 July New Shepard space rocket blast-off for \$28M, the company announced on Saturday. With 20 active bidders starting at \$4.8M during the 10-minute auction, bids escalated in the final three minutes of the sale. Initially, about 7,600 people registered to bid from 159 countries, the company said. The winner, whose identity has not been announced, will join the Amazon founder Bezos and his brother Mark on the flight.

The 11-minute, automated flight – the company's 16th but first carrying humans – will lift off from Van Horn, Texas. The capsule will carry as many as six passengers, though the company has not yet revealed who else will be onboard. Last week, Bezos, who will step down as Amazon's chief executive officer 15 days before the flight, posted on Instagram: "Ever since I was five years old, I've dreamed of traveling to space. On July 20th, I will take that journey with my brother. The greatest adventure, with my best friend."

The trip comes amid increasing competition between the some of the world's

wealthiest men. Blue Origin is vying with Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies and the Richard Branson-backed Virgin Galactic Holdings to offer trips to space, with Branson's Virgin craft also expected to launch passengers soon after from a space centre near Truth or Consequences in New Mexico.

Bezos, who has been spending about \$1B a year from his Amazon fortune to fund Blue Origin, has compared space tourism to the barnstormers whose stunt flying enlivened the early days of aviation. Advertisement Passengers, the company has said, must be between 5ft and 6ft 4in tall, weighing 110-223lb. They must also be able to climb seven flights of stairs at the launch tower in less than 90 seconds and sit strapped in the vehicle for as long as 90 minutes without access to a lavatory.

Further, they should be able to withstand gravitational forces of as much as 5.5 times the person's normal weight during descent and three times the weight for as long as two minutes on ascent.

The company has said the auction price will be donated to Blue Origin's foundation, Club for the Future, whose stated mission "is to inspire future generations to pursue careers in Stem (science, technology, engineering, and math) and to help invent the future of life in space."

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Article by JANUARY BARNES