

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Plans unveiled for first luxury space hotel

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Rendering of Aurora Station. Image courtesy of Orion Span

By STAFF REPORTS

Technology startup Orion Span is opening up the first luxury hotel in space, allowing guests to live like astronauts during a \$9.5 million tour.

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Dubbed Aurora Station after the polar light phenomena, the hotel is slated to launch late in 2021, with the first guests arriving in 2022. Even with the hefty price tag, the experience aims to make space travel more accessible.

"We developed Aurora Station to provide a turnkey destination in space," said Frank Bungler, chief executive officer and founder of Orion Span. "Upon launch, Aurora Station goes into service immediately, bringing travelers into space quicker and at a lower price point than ever seen before, while still providing an unforgettable experience.

"Orion Span has additionally taken what was historically a 24-month training regimen to prepare travelers to visit a space station and streamlined it to three months, at a fraction of the cost," he said. "Our goal is to make space accessible to all, by continuing to drive greater value at lower cost."

Space race

Orion Span announced its plans for Aurora Station at the Space 2.0 Summit in San Jose, CA on April 5.

The hotel will be able to hold six people, including two crew members. Orion Span will take guests on a 12-day tour in space, where they will get to experience zero gravity, take in aerial views of Earth and auroras as well as partake in experiments such as growing food in orbit.

Aurora Station will travel in a low earth orbit 200 miles above the planet. The vessel will complete an orbit every 90 minutes, allowing passengers to see 16 sunrises and sunsets each day.

During their stay, individuals can also videochat with friends and family back home and have a virtual reality experience on the holodeck.

Typically it takes individuals 24 months to prepare for space travel, but Orion Span has cut this training down to three months. Travelers will begin their Orion Span Astronaut Certification online, with the pre-flight coursework completed in-person at the company's facilities in Houston, TX.

Guests will achieve their final certification on-board Aurora Station.



Guests will get the astronaut experience. Image credit: Orion Span

While Aurora Station will not be taking guests for years, interested civilian astronauts can put down an \$80,000 refundable deposit.

In addition to hospitality, Aurora Station plans to offer space real estate for purchase, allowing individuals to buy a condominium within the structure.

"Aurora Station is incredibly versatile and has multiple uses beyond serving as a hotel," Mr. Bunger said. "We will offer full charters to space agencies who are looking to achieve human spaceflight in orbit for a fraction of the cost and only pay for what they use.

"We will support zero gravity research, as well as in space manufacturing. Our architecture is such that we can easily add capacity, enabling us to grow with market demand like a city growing skyward on Earth," he said. "We will later sell dedicated modules as the world's first condominiums in space. Future Aurora owners can live in, visit, or sublease their space condo. This is an exciting frontier and Orion Span is proud to pave the way."

High-end travel is highly focused on experiences, with operators looking to grab guests' attention with rare excursions.

Affluent consumers will soon be able to trace the transatlantic course of the ill-fated RMS Titanic on an exclusive survey expedition.

Built in Belfast, Ireland by the United Kingdom's White Star Line, the Titanic was deemed "unsinkable," being it was the largest passenger cruise liner built at the time. Despite its claim to fame, the Titanic sank on its maiden voyage between Southampton, England and New York Harbor on April 15, 1912 after colliding with an iceberg in the North Atlantic, a fact now disputed by experts ([see story](#)).

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