



It's getting real

What until not long ago seemed more like a story taken from a Jules Verne's novel rather a real opportunity for the industry, is slowly emerging as a promising market segment for the launch sector: space tourism. It is early days of course, but the signs are that taking paying customers to space will soon become a lucrative opportunity for the companies involved. At the moment, consolidation is at play in the market, in a clear sign that things will soon beginning to move in this area. Some companies are getting larger, acquiring technology and preparing themselves for the predicted growth in this sector.

Space Adventures, Ltd., one of the world's leading space experience companies, has recently announced an agreement to acquire Fountain Valley, California-based Space Launch Corporation.

The acquisition will provide Space Adventures with a technology development capability and access to significant space system intellectual property that will be leveraged to bring to market future space tourism vehicles in the US.

Eric Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Space Adventures, commented: "While Space Adventures will remain focused on the marketing of spaceflights as a space travel company, the acquisi-

tion of Space Launch will enhance our access to, and in-depth knowledge of, cutting-edge aerospace technology.

"As a wholly-owned subsidiary of Space Adventures, Space Launch will utilize its innovative technology and technical capability to build upon our existing market leadership position."

Space Adventures, the only company to have successfully launched private explorers to space, is headquartered in Vienna, Virginia with offices in Cape Canaveral, Florida, Moscow and Tokyo. It offers a variety of programs such as the availability today for orbital spaceflight missions to the International Space Station (ISS), commercial missions around the moon, Zero-Gravity and jet flights, cosmonaut training, spaceflight qualification programs and reservations on future suborbital spacecrafts.

The company's advisory board comprises Apollo 11 moonwalker Buzz Aldrin, Shuttle astronauts Kathy Thornton, Robert (Hoot) Gibson, Charles Walker, Norm Thagard, Sam Durrance, Byron Lichtenberg, Pierre Thuot and Skylab astronaut Owen Garriott.

Soon, many a customer armed with a few hundred thousand dollars to spare will be able to become 'private' astronauts, and space will become the latest holiday destination for the rich and famous. Quite a thought! ■

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