

## **VSS Enterprise's, First Flight**

### **World's First Commercial Spaceship Takes Inaugural Flight Mojave Air and Spaceport, Mojave, California**

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2010**

Virgin Galactic announced today that its commercial manned spaceship, VSS Enterprise, this morning successfully completed its first "captive carry" test flight, taking off at 07.05 am (PST) from Mojave Air and Spaceport, California.

The spaceship was unveiled to the public for the first time on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 and named by Governors Schwarzenegger and Richardson. VSS Enterprise remained attached to its unique WhiteKnightTwo carrier aircraft, VMS Eve, for the duration of the 2 hours 54 minutes flight, achieving an altitude of 45,000ft (13716 metres).

Both vehicles are being developed for Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, by Mojave based Scaled Composites. Founded by Burt Rutan, Scaled developed SpaceShipOne which in 2004 claimed the \$10m Ansari X prize as the world's first privately developed manned spacecraft. Virgin Galactic's new vehicles share much of the same basic design but are being built to carry six fare paying passengers on sub-orbital space flights, allowing an out-of-the-seat zero gravity experience and offering astounding views of the planet from the black sky of space.

Virgin Galactic has already taken around \$45m in deposits for spaceflight reservations from over 330 people wanting to experience space for themselves.

The first flight of VMS Enterprise is another major milestone in an exhaustive flight testing programme, which started with the inaugural flight of VMS Eve in 2008 and is at the heart of Virgin Galactic's commitment to safety.

Commenting on the historic flight, Burt Rutan said: "This is a momentous day for the Scaled and Virgin Teams. The captive carry flight signifies the start of what we believe will be extremely exciting and successful spaceship flight test program."

Sir Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Galactic added: "Seeing the finished spaceship in December was a major day for us but watching VSS Enterprise fly for the first

time really brings home what beautiful, ground-breaking vehicles Burt and his team have developed for us. It comes as no surprise that the flight went so well; the Scaled team is uniquely qualified to bring this important and incredible dream to reality. Today was another major step along that road and a testament to US engineering and innovation."

The VSS Enterprise test flight programme will continue through 2010 and 2011, progressing from captive carry to independent glide and then powered flight, prior to the start of commercial operations.

For further information go to [www.virgingalactic.com](http://www.virgingalactic.com)

For background details, downloadable images and graphics go to: [www.virgingalactic.com/captivecarry](http://www.virgingalactic.com/captivecarry)