

Space Vacation

Outer Space—A Nice Place to Visit?

Where will you go on your next vacation? Disneyland? Sea World? Outer space?

That's right; tourists are now paying big bucks to travel into space with astronauts! The first space tourist was Dennis Tito, an American businessman. In 2001, he paid about \$20 million to ride on a Russian rocket to the International Space Station. The Space Station circles 220 miles above Earth. Tito stayed on the station for a week, hanging out with astronauts and eating space food.

The latest space tourist was Anousheh Ansari, an Iranian-born woman from the United States who went to the Space Station in mid-September 2006.

How safe is space travel? Apart from the risk of crashing, space tourists have some special things to worry about. Earth's atmosphere protects us from dangerous **radiation**¹ from the sun. Space travelers are exposed to more of the sun's rays. But for tourists spending only a few days or weeks in space, the radiation probably isn't harmful.

A bigger problem might be space sickness. Without Earth's **gravity**² to hold them down, visitors to the Space Station float around inside the craft. It may look like fun on TV, but it can make first-time space travelers dizzy and sick. Luckily, the sickness usually wears off quickly. Then space tourists can enjoy their trip—and the amazing view of Earth.

1 **radiation:** energy in the form of waves or particles coming from a source such as the sun

2 **gravity:** the force which causes objects to be drawn toward the Earth's center