

ECONOMIC PURPOSE CARD

Eco-Tourism In Space



Would you like to spend your vacation on the moon or on Mars? Eco-tourism in space may be the perfect trip for you.

Ecotourism is a new way to travel. It means responsible travel to a place that protects the environment. The travel also helps the people in the place. It often involves teaching or learning about the place visited.

There is worldwide interest in traveling to space. A survey done by the Commercial Spaceflight Federation found that over 70% of the people asked said they would want to spend 2 weeks in space, 88% wanted to walk in space, and 21% wanted to stay at a hotel or space station.

A number of Space Tourism companies are trying to bring space travel for recreational purposes to the public. Elon Musk, an inventor, is investing a great deal of money in making space travel an industry like air travel. He even wants to setup dome cities on Mars. Imagine what people might pay in order to experience such a learning adventure!

In fact, Dennis Tito a very wealthy businessman visited the International Space Station in 2001. The International Space Station is a large spacecraft that orbits around the

Earth. It is a science lab where many astronauts from many countries live and work together. Mr. Tito stayed for seven days, and he was the first “fee-paying” space tourist. The fee he paid was a hefty \$20 million dollars! This may seem like a huge amount of money, but a number of people since Mr. Tito’s journey have paid that amount or more to be a part of space’s eco-tourism industry.

If \$20-40 million seems a little steep for a week’s stay in space, there are people willing to pay just \$250,000 for a ride with Virgin Galactic, the world’s first commercial spaceline. After three days of training at Spaceport America in New Mexico, the tourists have a 2 ½ hours ride above Earth’s atmosphere in a no-gravity zone where they get out of their seats and experience weightlessness. Once back on Earth, they celebrate with family and friends.

Yes, there is a great deal of interest in space tourism. But, there are still many challenges. Scientists still need to find ways to meet the human need of sufficient air, consistent temperature, and a long exposure to the lack of gravity. Safety improvements in both launching and landing must be made. Also, the industry needs to find ways to cut down on costs. But, because there is such interest in this area of tourism, competition should bring down costs and also create safer vehicles.

Richard Attenborough, the president of Virgin Galactic said recently, “Hopefully there will be a large, thriving, vibrant industry that will make it possible for most people to go into space in my lifetime.”