

Space Tourism: The Next Frontier of Travel

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

INTERACTIVE ONLINE TEST

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

A In the past, space was an exclusive realm, accessible only to trained astronauts and select scientists. Today, however, commercial space tourism is rapidly transitioning from science fiction to reality. With private companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Virgin Galactic leading the charge, the notion of civilians orbiting the Earth or enjoying zero-gravity experiences is becoming increasingly plausible. The development of reusable rockets has dramatically reduced the cost of space travel. Where once launching a single mission cost hundreds of millions of dollars, advancements in engineering now allow for spacecraft to be used multiple times, bringing prices within reach—at least for the ultra-wealthy. For example, a suborbital flight with Virgin Galactic currently costs upwards of \$450,000 per seat, while orbital trips may exceed tens of millions. Despite the steep price tags, the allure of space continues to captivate public imagination. The view of Earth from above, the feeling of weightlessness, and the sense of pioneering a new form of exploration are powerful draws. Moreover, space tourism is often marketed not merely as a thrill-seeking adventure but as a transformative, even spiritual, experience. Yet, the emergence of space tourism also raises ethical and environmental concerns. Critics argue that prioritizing luxury space flights in an era of global inequality and environmental crisis reflects a misallocation of resources. Additionally, the environmental cost of rocket launches—though infrequent for now—could become significant if the industry scales up. Exhaust emissions released in the upper atmosphere may contribute to ozone depletion and climate change in ways that scientists are only beginning to understand. Advocates of space tourism, however, contend that such ventures may accelerate technological innovation and even fund scientific research. Some envision a future where off-planet travel alleviates Earth's overpopulation and resource scarcity. Others believe it is a natural extension of human curiosity and ambition. Whether one views space tourism as a revolutionary step forward or an indulgent detour, it undeniably signals a new chapter in human exploration. As with any frontier, its promise must be weighed against its potential risks.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
realm	a special area or field of interest or activity	<i>The artist created paintings in the realm of abstract art.</i>
plausible	seeming likely to be true, or able to be believed	<i>It's plausible that he will win the game because he has practiced a lot.</i>
allure	the quality of being attractive or interesting	<i>The allure of the beach made them decide to spend the summer there.</i>
pioneering	involving new ideas or methods	<i>She is known for her pioneering work in renewable energy.</i>
transformative	causing a big change in someone or something	<i>The new policy was transformative for the local economy.</i>
misallocation	the act of using resources in a way that is not effective or correct	<i>The misallocation of funds led to the project's failure.</i>
emergence	the process of becoming visible or important	<i>The emergence of new technologies has changed how we communicate.</i>
alleviates	makes a problem or pain less severe	<i>The doctor gave her medicine to alleviate the pain.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. In the past, space was an exclusive _____ only for astronauts.
2. Her explanation was so detailed that it seemed very _____.
3. The _____ of the mountain view attracted many visitors.
4. His _____ ideas changed the way people think about education.
5. The program had a _____ effect on the community, improving many lives.
6. The _____ of resources led to delays in the construction project.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What is one reason some people find space tourism appealing?

- A. It provides a sense of pioneering new exploration.
- B. It offers a chance to meet famous astronauts.
- C. It guarantees a safe trip back to Earth.
- D. It includes luxury accommodations in space.

Question 2

According to the passage, what is a potential environmental concern of space tourism?

- A. Ozone depletion due to rocket emissions.
- B. Noise pollution from rocket launches.
- C. Deforestation for building spaceports.
- D. Water pollution from space debris.

Question 3

Why do some advocates believe space tourism could benefit Earth?

- A. It might solve Earth's overpopulation issues.
- B. It will end global poverty.
- C. It could stop all climate change.
- D. It will replace traditional air travel.

Question 4

What technological advancement has made space travel more affordable?

- A. Development of faster rockets.
- B. Creation of reusable rockets.
- C. Invention of new space suits.
- D. Use of solar energy for launches.

Question 5

What does the passage suggest about the future of space tourism?

- A. It will become accessible to the general public soon.
- B. It will face significant ethical and environmental challenges.
- C. It will eventually replace other forms of travel.
- D. It will not progress beyond its current state.

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. Paragraph 2 mentions the high cost of space flights, like Virgin Galactic's \$450,000 seat price. Do you think these prices will decrease significantly in the next 20 years, and what factors could influence this change?

2. Paragraph 4 raises ethical concerns about space tourism in a time of global inequality. How do you think governments should address these ethical issues?

3. Paragraph 5 suggests that off-planet travel could alleviate Earth's overpopulation. Do you think this is a realistic solution, and what other measures could be more effective?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 A

Q2 A

Q3 A

Q4 B

Q5 B

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 realm

FIB2 plausible

FIB3 allure

FIB4 pioneering

FIB5 transformative

FIB6 misallocation

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What is one reason some people find space tourism appealing?

✓ A — It provides a sense of pioneering new exploration.

The passage mentions the sense of pioneering a new form of exploration as a powerful draw.

✗ B — It offers a chance to meet famous astronauts.

The passage does not mention meeting astronauts as a reason for appeal.

✗ C — It guarantees a safe trip back to Earth.

While safety may be a concern, it is not highlighted as a reason for appeal.

✗ D — It includes luxury accommodations in space.

The passage talks about luxury but not in terms of accommodations in space.

2. According to the passage, what is a potential environmental concern of space tourism?

✓ A — Ozone depletion due to rocket emissions.

The passage states that rocket emissions may contribute to ozone depletion.

✗ B — Noise pollution from rocket launches.

Noise pollution is not discussed as an environmental concern in the passage.

✗ C — Deforestation for building spaceports.

Deforestation is not mentioned in relation to space tourism.

✗ D — Water pollution from space debris.

Water pollution from space debris is not mentioned in the passage.

3. Why do some advocates believe space tourism could benefit Earth?

✓ A — It might solve Earth's overpopulation issues.

The passage mentions that some see off-planet travel as a way to alleviate overpopulation.

✗ B — It will end global poverty.

Global poverty is not mentioned as being solved by space tourism.

✗ C — It could stop all climate change.

The passage does not claim space tourism will stop climate change.

✗ D — It will replace traditional air travel.

Replacing air travel is not discussed as a benefit of space tourism.

4. What technological advancement has made space travel more affordable?

✓ B — Creation of reusable rockets.

The passage notes that reusable rockets have reduced the cost of space travel.

✗ A — Development of faster rockets.

Faster rockets are not mentioned as reducing costs.

✗ C — Invention of new space suits.

Space suits are not highlighted as a factor in cost reduction.

✗ D — Use of solar energy for launches.

Solar energy is not mentioned in relation to launching costs.

5. What does the passage suggest about the future of space tourism?

✓ B — It will face significant ethical and environmental challenges.

The passage discusses ethical and environmental concerns as potential challenges.

✗ A — It will become accessible to the general public soon.

The passage does not suggest that it will soon be accessible to everyone.

✗ C — It will eventually replace other forms of travel.

Replacing other travel forms is not discussed as a future possibility.

✗ D — It will not progress beyond its current state.

The passage suggests potential growth despite challenges, not stagnation.

MORE C1 LEVEL READING PRACTICE

Sociology Trust Modern Societies — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/c1/sociology-trust-modern-societies>

Economics Global Art Market — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/c1/economics-global-art-market>

Digital Memory Technology Changing Human Recall — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/c1/digital-memory-technology-changing-human-recall>