

Pay \$125K to fly into the Stratosphere in a Hydrogen Balloon?



It's like a bad ["Fact or Crap"](#) question.

And, yes, you may [reserve a seat](#) on the [Spaceship Neptune](#) for \$125K, courtesy of [Space Perspective](#), space flight company, which is proposing this idea. The six hour flight goes 100K feet up (1/3 of the way to outer space), high enough to see the curvature of the Earth. A football field sized balloon tows a 16-foot-wide capsule with 9 seats (8 passengers and a pilot), bathroom, bar, Wi-Fi, communications devices to allow live streaming, and a splashdown cone at base for landing. Touted as a ["radically gentle voyage"](#), the airship travels at 12mph, two hours to reach cruising level, drift for hours and descend to land in the Atlantic Ocean. A recovery ship will pick up the passengers from there.



Husband and wife CEOs, [Taber](#)

[MacCallum](#) and [Jane Poynter](#), founded Space Perspective in 2019 with the mission to make spaceflight more accessible. Spaceflights for 2024 are booked; reservations are available for 2025. Both CEOs founded [World View Enterprises, Inc.](#), space exploration company in 2012; one of the company's [high-altitude balloons](#) exploded in Arizona during a 2017 fuel fill test. The company reportedly was able to use helium or hydrogen in its balloons but the company would not say which was used during the explosion. Video showed gas going up in flames, indicating [hydrogen use](#). Two employees were treated for ringing in the ears, the boom shook up residents in the area, and the explosion caused some facility damage, but was otherwise uneventful.

MacCallum said that [helium has become difficult to obtain](#), resulting in the decision to use hydrogen. The company [insists](#), "Hydrogen is the gas of choice of balloonists around the world.

There have been no recorded gas balloon flight failures caused by hydrogen going all the way back to the earliest flights in the 1700s.” Hot air balloons today use hydrogen or helium for liftoff but use burning liquid propane to maintain the flight. Airships use helium, not hydrogen...

So, let's talk about the [Hindenburg](#). The good news from that disaster is that the number of survivors was higher than the number of victims – of the 97 passengers and crew, 62 survived. [Hugo Eckener](#), the Hindenburg designer, [wanted to use helium](#) instead of hydrogen but the US had a monopoly on the world supply and did not want other countries using helium for military uses. The Hindenberg was filled with 7M cubic feet of hydrogen gas and (nope not kidding) included a [smoking room](#). Passengers could buy cigarettes and Cuban cigars on board and smoke in that room. The room had a double-door airlock and was pressurized to prevent hydrogen from getting in. Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propaganda minister, pushed to have the airship named after Hitler, but Eckener named it after the late German president Paul von Hindenburg. Most ships took 5-10 days to cross the Atlantic ocean, but the Hindenburg could make the trip in 2 ½ days, and crossed [34 times](#) before the accident.

The Hindenburg disaster was caused by electrostatic discharge – a spark ignited leaking hydrogen. Eckener had a perfect safety record prior to this flight, with no passenger ever sustaining serious injury in over [1M air miles](#) of flight. He believed the leak was caused by the airship taking a sharp turn which overstrained a bracing wire, causing it to snap and rip open an adjacent gas cell. The airship was 60 meters above the airfield and the accident was captured on film. There had been numerous similar accidents prior to this one, with more casualties, but in remote areas with little media attention. The [disturbing sight](#) of the burning airship putting an end to this approach to passenger flight (at that time).



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