

Book your space flight today

It was bound to happen sooner or later, and sure enough, you can now catch a flight into space. Starting in 2013, Virgin Galactic (www.virgingalactic.com), owned by Sir Richard Branson, will be offering trips into space aboard the brand new "Space Ship Two," which was designed specifically for space tourism. While the excitement has been building for some time, the price tag of \$200,000 might calm you down. The big spenders will zoom to an altitude of 62 miles (100 kilometres) to the edge of space, then freefall to Earth to give passengers a few minutes of weightlessness, a view of the darkness of space and the curvature of Earth below before returning to the ground. While the price sounds outrageous to the average guy, believe it or not they already have \$60 million dollars in commitments, and it grows by the day. If you make a seven-digit cash out on the farm or business and don't think you'll live to the days they'll crack the light barrier like in the 1968 movie *Space Ody-*



Neel Roberts
The Sky's the Limit

sey 2001, this maybe one for the outrageous things you'll consider. Those interested in this once in a lifetime event can contact Vision 2000 Travel Group in Calgary (www.vision2000alberta.ca) at 403-777-0777.

Sky watch for the next month

The largest full moon of the year will be seen on Saturday after sunset. Look southeast-east at about 9 p.m. until Sunday dawn in the southwest-west. Coastal cities will also report larger than normal tides, so it's a great day to go oyster hunting.

Impress mom on her day as Jupiter will be right in front of the sun when it rises. You can see it with solar filters attached to binoculars, but of course a telescope gives a better view.

Watch for the annular

solar eclipse. Some parts of western Canada will be fortunate to catch this on the Victoria Day long weekend on May 20. Starting at about 3 p.m., it will peak at 5:53 p.m. and end at 8:49 p.m., so if the weather cooperates, it will be a nice addition if you're camping. You can also catch it live online at <http://www.astronomylive.com/event/annular-solar-eclipse-20-may-2012>.

The Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower, which is caused by comet 1P Halley, will shoot 10-20 meteors per hour before dawn on Saturday and Sunday, but the full moon will reduce the visibility. Prime viewing is southeast-east at about 4 a.m. until sun up.

Public events for the next month

Mark down May 11 at 7:30 p.m. on your calendar and join us at the Tourism and Trek Station for our monthly Star Gazing. A short indoor presentation is followed by outdoor gazing with the telescope (weather pending). Come and learn about the upcoming Annular Solar Eclipse. For fur-

ther information, contact the Trek Station at 403-485-2994. Visit the website www.vulcantourism.com, which is updated regularly, for more info.

The Saturday Observer's Night, which is hosted by the All Star Telescope (www.all-startelescope.com) just outside Didsbury, takes place May 26 starting at 8 p.m. until midnight. This full facility telescope dealer has a heated showroom, with washrooms, and everything is provided at no charge. I am planning to attend, and you are welcome to caravan with a group I am assembling leaving Vulcan at about 5 p.m. weather permitting. We stop for a Chinese buffet before heading to the celestial farm for the evening. For further information, contact Ken From at 866-310-8844 or visit www.all-startelescope.com/index.php/Observer-Nights.html.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-485-2683 and Neel_Roberts@