

# Billionaires jumping on space exploration bandwagon

If you make to the "Rich Club," is it really possible to do anything? At least some reckon commercializing the cosmos is now within their reach. Recently, *USA Today* announced members of the billionaire club seem called to back ambitious celestial projects. The SpaceX ship funded by PayPal tycoon Elon Musk launched back in May is the first privately financed cargo delivery vehicle to the International Space Station. Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen announced in 2011 that his Stratolaunch Systems firm would build a jet longer than a football field with a 385-foot wingspan to launch light rockets from high altitudes into space. A few months ago, X Prize foundation boss Peter Diamandis declared that Planetary Resources aims to localize vehicles into space for excavating minerals from close to Earth asteroids within 10 years. Backers include the Google guys Larry Page and Eric Schmidt, film director James Cameron and



**Neel Roberts**  
*The Sky's the Limit*

Ross Perot Jr. "We're now seeing a new generation of (hundred)-millionaires and billionaires who are interested in space. This is smart money investing in one of the largest commercial opportunities ongoing to space; for gaining resources for the benefit of humanity," explains space entrepreneur Diamandis.

## **Sky watch for the next month**

The Early Morning Lunar and Planet Showcase takes place on Sunday, July 15 at about 2:30 a.m. Jupiter will start to rise in the east-northeast, followed by the waning crescent Moon and Venus at the bottom. The trio will be visible until sunrise.

Venus will be at its greatest

brightness on Wednesday, July 11 at about 3:20 a.m., rising in the east-northeast until daylight. The mother planet will be at its brightest (-4.7 magnitude) illumination for the year.

The Delta Aquarids Meteor Shower Peak can be seen on Saturday, July 28 and Sunday, July 29. Look in the southern sky after the Moon sets (at about 1:30 a.m.) until dawn as it expected meteors will fall at a rate of 15-20 per hour.

Mercury will lead the beehive down at dusk on Tuesday, July 3, after sundown. Look west-northwest and you will see Mercury right next to the Beehive (M44) as they disappear into the horizon at about 11 p.m.

## **Public events for the next month**

Mark down Friday, July 13 at 7:30 p.m. on your calendar, and join us at the Trek Station for our monthly star gazing. We will try to show you the rings of Saturn during daylight (yes, this is possible with the scope we

have!) followed by a short indoor presentation on "Friday the 13th" and the cosmos (weather pending). For further information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994.

Join us for some good times and great viewing under wonderfully dark skies during the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's annual Star-B-Q. Camping is \$20 per vehicle, and the Saturday buffet is \$21 per person. The gathering goes from Thursday, July 26 to Sunday, July 29 with all weekend camping at Eccles Ranch Observatory, just north of Caroline. For further information, phone Greg Bridger at 403-547-7044, email [abstarbq@shaw.ca](mailto:abstarbq@shaw.ca), or visit <http://calgary.rasc.ca/starbq.htm>.

*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@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com).*