

Adventurer to become first Dane in space

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36-year-old Per Wimmer is well on his way to becoming the first Danish space tourist - his \$100,000 ticket to the stars is already bought and paid for

Danish-born, London-based investment banker Per Wimmer is about to go where no Dane has gone before - namely, on a charter flight to outer space. Daily newspaper Jyllands-Posten spoke with the adventurous Dane whose USD 100,000 ticket to the stars was signed and cleared four years ago.

The 36-year-old Slagelse native, took a law degree at Copenhagen University before becoming a junior representative at the EU Commission's US office, earning a masters' degree in international relations and finance at Harvard along the way, going on to stints at investment bank Goldman Sachs' Wall Street and London branches. Over the past seven years, Wimmer has spent his considerable discretionary income as a tourist in more than 50 countries, including every nation in South America, and even explored the darkest reaches of the Amazon.

'I've deliberately sought out the furthest corners of the world. It's exciting to travel - but no matter where you go, there's a pop machine on every street corner. Outer space is the ultimate journey. We as human beings have only ever travelled in two dimensions on Earth. This is the third dimension,' said Wimmer.

Per Wimmer is scheduled to make his momentous launch from Russia in 2006 together with two other passengers, aboard either the American Spaceship One or Russian vessel C21.

Spaceship One has a wingspan of just five-six meters and a cabin with barely enough space for three passengers. Despite its bare-bones accoutrements, the American ship has proven that it can withstand the trip to space and back.

In preparation for his journey, Per Wimmer is currently training at cosmonaut facilities at Star City, outside Moscow. Wimmer has undergone test flights in a MIG plane at the Zhykvoski test pilot center to prepare his body for 7G conditions, seven times stronger than the earth's gravitational pull. In a transport plane affectionately dubbed 'Vomit Comets,' Wimmer has plunged from heights of 14 kilometers and learned how to move in zero gravity conditions. Sometimes, Wimmer told Jyllands Posten, the prospective space tourists play volleyball - using an actual human body in weightless conditions as 'the ball.'

'My vision is to plant a Danish flag on the moon one day. It's my ultimate vision - even though it's not very realistic. But a lot of people said the same thing four years ago, when I bought my ticket to space - and here I am,' said Wimmer