

## THE LAUNCH

## To Infinity and Beyond

**W**HAT DO ACTOR ASHTON KUTCHER, soprano Sarah Brightman, and comedian Russell Brand have in common? They're future space cadets. With the inaugural passenger flight of Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic set for late this year, superstars and space tourists will have the opportunity to blast to a suborbital point approximately ten times the altitude typically reached by commercial aircraft. ¶ **Spaceports are popping up** around the globe with eight in the U.S., including Spaceport America, the home of Virgin Galactic. Set among the cattle ranches and creosote bushes of Las Cruces, New Mexico, the futuristic facility is the base from which future astronauts will blast off to see the curvature of Earth, peer hundreds of miles into the inky depths of space, and experience a few moments of weightlessness. ¶ The adventure comes at a stratospheric cost of \$200,000. Tickets will drop to \$100,000 or less when Armadillo Aerospace and XCOR Aerospace begin service. With the final frontier on the horizon, staying earthbound suddenly seems old-fashioned. —TERESA BITLER



*New Mexico's  
Spaceport  
America is  
ground zero  
for commercial  
space travel.*



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