



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

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Engineers Use Giant Balloons to Build Underground Tunnels

Also, human space pods, and radiation-resistant robots.



Human Space Pods

Back in March, space tourism company Zero 2 Infinity [announced](#) that they were taking their balloon-based flight concept and expanding it into the commercial satellite launching business with Bloostar. I feared that the news meant that the company was abandoning plans to take space tourists to the edge of the Earth's atmosphere in large pods tied to huge balloon. It turns out that the company not only remains committed to space tourism, but they just unveiled the final design of the Bloon pod.

Over the course of the last nine months, the company worked with the Elisava School of Design and Engineering on the interior design of the pressurized pod.

Bloon rides could be operational within the next two years, and to gain some insight on the user experience, six student designers on the project locked themselves in a 12 square meter space for six hours, about two hours longer than the expected duration of the flight that will carry four passengers and two pilots nearly 22.5 miles (36 km) above the earth's surface – 1.5 to climb, two hours of viewing, and then a one-hour return. During the return, the pod will actually detach from the balloon and allow passengers to experience free fall and zero gravity before the parachute engages.

The design is a modular space five meters in diameter. The pod will have reclinable and movable seats, washbasins, floors and walls built with soft materials. And the windows will be smart, so you can actually use applications in the windows to listen to music, or locate places on Earth, for example.

Tickets for a trip in a Bloon pod will cost more than \$125,000 (€110,000).