

Kazakhstan Gets Russian Trip to Space Station 3 Times Cheaper Than NASA

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Kazakhstan will pay a mere \$20 million to send an astronaut to the International Space Station on a Russian rocket — less than half the sum reportedly asked of a British passenger to make the same trip and less than one-third of the price routinely paid by NASA for U.S. astronauts, news agency RIA Novosti reported Wednesday, citing a Kazakh space agency official.

Russia's space agency last month confirmed that Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov would replace British singer Sarah Brightman aboard an upcoming Soyuz rocket launch in September. Brightman backed out of the flight in May, citing personal reasons.

The Russian and Kazakh space agencies have agreed on a price of \$20 million for the flight — 2.5 times cheaper than Brightman's reported \$52 million ticket, RIA Novosti cited Kazakh space official Yerkin Shaimagambetov as saying Wednesday.

NASA, which co-operates the \$150 billion space station with Russian space agency

Roscosmos, currently pays around \$72 million per Soyuz flight to send its astronauts to the station. Flights take place three to four times a year.

One reason for Kazakhstan's stellar deal is the country's ownership of the spaceport from which the Soyuz rocket will launch.

Shaimagambetov said the Kazakh and Russian space agencies were considering subtracting the \$20 million fee from Russia's annual \$115 million rent for the Baikonur Cosmodrome on the Kazakh desert steppe, where Russian rockets frequently launch.

Despite having the world's largest and most active cosmodrome on its territory, Aimbetov will be the third-ever Kazakh cosmonaut to fly to space.

Toktar Aubakirov, Kazakhstan's first cosmonaut, flew in October 1991. The second, Talgat Musabayev, flew three times — once in 1994, then again in 1998 and 2001. Musabayev is now the head of Kazakh space agency Kazcosmos.

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