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Russia to Send 'Outstanding Citizens' to Space for Free

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Roscosmos

Russia's state space agency plans to send "outstanding citizens" to the International Space Station (ISS) at no cost in exchange for their achievements, the agency's head announced on Thursday.

The Roscosmos space agency plans to send tourists to the ISS in late 2021 under a deal signed with the U.S. tourism firm Space Adventures. Dmitry Rogozin, the head Roscosmos, has vowed to bring tourists to the ISS in less time than a Moscow-Brussels flight after a cargo spacecraft set a record last summer to reach the station.

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"We'll introduce rewards in the next phase [of space tourism]. In other words, we'll send unique Russian citizens [to the ISS] for their unique accomplishments," Rogozin was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

He said teachers and scientists will be among the Russian space tourists given priority, according to the Kommersant business daily.

The Progress MS-11 cargo craft set another record of 3 hours and 22 minutes last week. Rogozin said shorter missions will boost Russia's competitiveness in the space tourism industry.

A state-run survey released to coincide with national Cosmonautics Day on Friday showed that a majority of Russian respondents still view their country as a global leader in space exploration.

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