

# Economy Fare (\$100,000) Lifts Space-Tourism Race

BY ANDY PASZTOR

**A** PRICE WAR already is brewing among companies seeking to sign up would-be space tourists, years before the first privately financed rocketplanes are scheduled to begin flying.

**XCOR Aerospace** of Mojave, Calif., the latest entrant to the derby to blast thrill-seekers into the upper reaches of the atmosphere, is expected to unveil plans Wednesday for a rocket-powered vehicle that is substantially smaller, slower and less expensive to build than any of those proposed by rivals. With tickets projected at \$100,000 a pop, the low-fare carrier to the heavens would hardly be cheap.

Anticipated to cost less than \$10 million to build and to be more compact than many propeller planes used by recreational pilots, XCOR's Lynx vehicle is intended to carry a pilot

and a single passenger at twice the speed of sound to about 37 miles above the earth. The entire outing, which would begin and end at a conventional airport and include about two minutes of suborbital zero gravity, would take less than half an hour.

That is a significantly shorter trip—and only about half the ticket price—envisioned by British billionaire Sir Richard Branson on his Virgin Galactic spaceship. A sleek and more powerful six-passenger craft, it is designed to travel at about four times the speed of sound and zoom completely out of the atmosphere—reaching true space more than 60 miles above the earth.

The price tag to develop Mr. Branson's high-profile venture, including a hulking, four-engine plane intended to carry the rocket-powered vehicle dur-

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A rendering of XCOR's Lynx rocket-powered vehicle

