

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Day-trip with a difference



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Callum: Hello, I'm Callum Robertson, welcome to Six Minute English. With me today is Neil Edgeller. Hello Neil.

Neil: Hi Callum.

Callum: Now in today's programme we're going to be looking at day-trips, but not your average kind of day-trip. First Neil, can you explain what we mean by a day-trip.

Neil: Sure, a day-trip is like a short holiday. You go somewhere and come back on the same day.

Callum: Yes, when I was a child I remember we used to go on day-trips to the beach or day-trips to the forest. What about you Neil, did you or do you go on day-trips?

Neil: When I was a kid I lived in Canada and we often had visitors and we took them to local places of interest on day-trips, for example Niagra Falls.

Callum: Wow, that's a great place for a day trip. Our topic today is all about a day-trip that is literally out of this world. The day-trips I'm talking about are into space. If you've ever dreamt of being an astronaut, now you can make that dream come true. Provided you can afford it!

Before we hear more about this, let's have this week's question. Now we're talking about space, so it's a space related question for you Neil, which planet is generally, is mostly the closest to Earth, is it:



a: Mars, b: Venus or c: Jupiter

Neil: Er, it's Mars isn't it?

Callum: OK, Well we'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme.

Now a company is selling tickets for day-trips to space. They're building special craft to do this and one of these was revealed to the public earlier this year. We're going to listen to BBC reporter Rajesh Mirchandani with some more details but before we do here's some of the vocabulary you'll hear. First 'glimpse', 'glimpse', tell us about this word Neil.

Neil: 'Glimpse' is a word which means to see something, but to see it only for a short time or not completely. It can be a verb, or a noun. You can 'glimpse something' or you can 'catch a glimpse of something'.

Callum: And one more expression to look out for, 'under-wraps', 'under-wraps', Neil?

Neil: If something is 'under-wraps' it means it is secret, it has not been shown to the public.

Callum: Okay, so you'll hear those two expressions in this report. Also, listen out for the answer to this question. How high above earth will the actual spaceship travel?

RAJESH MIRCHANDANI

After four years secret development in California's Mojave Desert, now the first public glimpse of White Knight 2, the hardware designed to take paying passengers into space.

But this isn't the spaceship, that's still unfinished and under wraps. This is the launch aircraft that will carry the spaceship to 50,000 feet from where it fires its own rockets and climbs to 62 miles above the Earth.



Callum: So Neil, let's answer the distance question first. How high above the Earth will the actual spaceship travel?

Neil: It'll be 62 miles. Which is about 100 km.

Callum: So actually, for a day, trip, it's not really that far, is it? Now there was also mention of another distance, 50,000 feet, what was that?

Neil: Well there are two parts to the spacecraft. There is an aircraft, which is what was revealed, and this plane is used to carry the actual spaceship. So the plane carries the spaceship to 50,000 feet, which is about 15km, and then the spaceship launches from there and goes up to 62 miles.

Callum: And what do we know about the spaceship itself?

Neil: Well not that much as that is what is still 'under-wraps', that's still secret.

Callum: Ok, now Neil, would you fancy this day-trip? Would you fancy going up into space?

Neil: One question, an important one. How much does it cost?

Callum: Well you can book a ticket for this space trip, this day-trip to space, for only \$200,000!

Neil: Well, er, no, that is my answer!

Callum: I think it would depend on what you get for your money. What do you get for \$200,000. Let's have a listen to Rajesh Mirchandani who can tell us a bit about that.



RAJESH MIRCHANDANI

The two-and-a-half hour sub-orbital trip offers five minutes of weightlessness and stunning views before gliding back down.

Callum: So the whole trip takes two and a half hours and that includes 5 minutes of weightlessness and stunning views.

‘Weightlessness’, can you explain that Neil.

Neil: It’s when you are floating in the air. If you’ve seen films of astronauts in spaceships they just float around of course because there is no gravity. They are weightless. So that’s one experience you’d have on the trip, weightlessness.

Callum: And stunning views. That was something else that was mentioned, stunning views, meaning fantastic. Personally I think that would be an amazing thing to see, to see the Earth from a great distance. I think if I had that money to spare, I’d take the trip. Neil, would you?

Neil: No. I don’t like flying anyway!

Callum: OK, so that would be, probably you could look at it on television, so there you go. Well that’s about all we have today, before we go though, the answer to this week’s question. Which planet is mostly closest to Earth? Neil, you said

Neil: I said Mars.

Callum: It’s actually Venus. Venus is actually closest to Earth for most, for most time. So hard luck on that one.

Well time for us to go, do join us again for more 6 Minute English.