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Quantum fluctuations in space, science, exploration and other cosmic fields... served up regularly by MSNBC.com science editor Alan Boyle since 2002.



Alan Boyle covers the physical sciences, anthropology, technological innovation and space science and exploration for MSNBC.com. He is a winner of the [AAAS Science Journalism Award](#), the [NASW Science-in-Society Award](#) and other honors; a contributor to "[A Field Guide for Science Writers](#)"; and a member of the board of the [Council for the Advancement of Science Writing](#).

Check out Boyle's [biography](#) or send a message to Cosmic Log via cosmiclog@msnbc.com.

SIZING UP THE SPACE HOTEL Sizing up the space hotel

Posted: Thursday, August 16, 2007 6:55 PM by Alan Boyle



Galactic Suite

This artist's conception shows a Galactic Suite hotel serviced by a space shuttle. Executives at 4Frontiers say the final designs may be dramatically different.

Can a Spanish-led venture really put a [luxury space hotel](#) in orbit by 2012? No way, says a Florida firm that has served as a consultant to the [Galactic Suite](#) venture. But if you look beyond 2015, the job just *might* be doable, representatives of [4Frontiers Corp.](#) say.

Barcelona-based Galactic Suite made a splash last week when a [Reuters article](#) quoted the venture's director, Xavier Claramunt, as saying he expected to put up the world's first space hotel in 2012. Tourists would undergo training in a James Bondish space camp, then fly up for a three-day, \$4 million stay on a private space station, according to Reuters.

The Reuters article, which provided much of the raw material for our own report on the Galactic Suite concept, said an American company intent on colonizing Mars had "come on board" for the project.

That company happens to be [4Frontiers](#), a space commerce company that was founded two years ago in New Port Richey, Fla. The company is trying to work its way into a variety of projects - ranging from consultation on space settlement issues, to curriculum development for elementary- and middle-school science classes, to space-themed entertainment and space-branded gifts and accessories.

Mark Homnick, the chief executive officer and co-founder of 4Frontiers, told me this week that Galactic Suite hired his firm "as a consultant to provide strategic business planning insights," and to turn the venture's artwork into "components that are adaptable into current space hardware."

Homnick quickly brought the high-flown claims in the Reuters report back down to Earth. For example, he noted that Bigelow Aerospace is planning to launch a habitable Sundancer space module in [2010 or earlier](#). If Bigelow is able to follow that timeline, Sundancer could be considered the world's first space hotel (unless you regard the [international space station](#) as a glorified tourist destination).

Galactic Suite would certainly not be in the orbital business in 2012, primarily because there wouldn't be a reliable way to get tourists up there in the numbers required, Homnick said.

"We do expect somewhat improved orbital access to be available for tourism in that time frame ... but the amount of folks who can go up there will be pretty limited," he said. "Why would we put an orbital resort there that no one can reach?"

Homnick said he's guessing that the required launch capability won't be available until 2015 or later. And he said 4Frontiers has already begun making contacts with the companies that might be providing those capabilities in the years ahead.

"I believe that the response to the Galactic Suite orbital resort concept is going to be an early indicator for the success of other initiatives," he said.

So is Galactic Suite for real after all? That's hard to judge, even for 4Frontiers. Homnick emphasized that his company has not yet decided what its relationship with Galactic Suite will be over the long term. "We're going through a due-diligence process," Homnick said. "This is pretty early on."

He declined to discuss what he knew about Galactic Suite's finances - for example, the claim in the Reuters report that the venture already has found a space enthusiast willing to front "most of the \$3 billion needed to build the hotel."

"I hate to say 'no comment,' but unfortunately we don't have much leeway" due to legal restrictions on what can be publicly discussed, Homnick said.

In any case, it appears that the venture is intriguing enough to engage the interest of someone who draws upon more than two decades of hard-core business experience at AT&T and Intel. Homnick says the fact that he and his 4Frontiers colleagues are still talking with the folks at Galactic Suite should count for something.

"Obviously, we wouldn't have gone with them and wouldn't have spent a lot of time with them unless we were interested in them as a client," he said.

There's a "giggle factor" that surrounds any venture that talks about building cities in space, or mining asteroids, or colonizing another planet. That goes for 4Frontiers as well as for Galactic Suite. But Homnick and his colleagues are willing to start with the smaller steps here on Earth - like the [Crazy4Mars](#) Web site, for instance - and have faith that the giggles will eventually die away.

"Certainly this is speculative," Homnick said. "Certainly the orbital resort is challenging in itself. It's quite speculative. But still, it's the kind of thing that we have to start talking about."

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Who will win the space-hotel race: Bigelow or Galactic Suite?

Answer: The one who figures out how to get their guests to have pleasant SEX on zero-g ;-)

PS: Has anyone an idea of how many guests per trip these guys of Galactic Suite are aiming for? 3? 4?

And how many crew members?

red pill junkie, Mexico city (Sent Thursday, August 16, 2007 8:09 PM)

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