

'Best day ever': Jeff Bezos blasts into space on own rocket



Mission successful: Jeff Bezos giving a thumbs up after returning from space in Texas on Tuesday. ■ AFP

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VAN HORN

Jeff Bezos blasted into space on Tuesday on his rocket company's first flight with people on board, becoming the second billionaire in just over a week to ride his own spacecraft.

The Amazon founder was accompanied by a hand-picked group: his brother, an 18-year-old from the Netherlands and an 82-year-old aviation pioneer from Texas – the youngest and oldest to

ever fly in space.

"Best day ever!" Mr. Bezos said when the capsule touched down on the desert floor at the end of the 10-minute flight.

New Shepard

Named after America's first astronaut, Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket soared from remote West Texas on the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, a date chosen by Mr. Bezos for its historical significance. He

held fast to it, even as Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson pushed up his own flight from New Mexico in the race for space tourist dollars and beat him to space by nine days. Unlike Mr. Branson's piloted rocket plane, Mr. Bezos' capsule was completely automated and required no official staff on board for the up-and-down flight.

Blue Origin reached an altitude of about 106 km, more than 16 km higher than Branson's July 11 ride.