

Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2012 6:50 PM

Subject: "Space Adventures" Schedules Privately-Funded Man-Around-Moon Flight Feb 2017

1. Eric Anderson of 'Space Adventures, Inc.' has been talking about this idea for years. 2. Russian space officials have blown hot and cold on it.

3. This latest announcement posted on youtube this afternoon now sets a date: by February 2017.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVdw5m9dgDc&feature=player_embedded

4. He says it's to mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Apollo program, and to pay tribute to the loss of the Apollo-1 astronauts Grissom, White, and Chaffee. 5. The Russians might be more interested in marking the hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

6. I'd always figured that if the Russians really thought they could mount a trans-lunar [lunar fly-by, with no braking into close orbit] mission for \$300,000,000, they would have done so with their own crew, just to reap the glory. 7. Considering recent setbacks in their program, it MIGHT be a more attractive program now, just to reaffirm their desire to push to the lead in spaceflight.

8. The mission is actually feasible because it would make use of existing rocket and space vehicle systems, modified. Nothing really new needs to be developed. The hard stuff has already been paid for and flight tested.

9. It's not really NEWS until a second ticket is sold and the Russians actually sign a contract. So far it's just a new level of hype.

10. Maybe Newt Gingrich will buy the other ticket. 11. His talk about private investments in moon missions wasn't all moonshine, since there actually is a fleet of privately-built moon robots getting ready for launch in the next year or two.

12. And privately-funded up-and-down space hops will be making commercial flights by early next year, barring catastrophe.

13. So the moon tourism concept isn't entirely looney -- it's a big STRETCH, but it's actually plausible under a series of lucky breaks.

14. I'll be watching from down here on the ground, but I'm flying out to Mojave Air and Space Port next week for a re-familiarization walkaround in advance of private space activity there restarting in a few months.