

| Space travel |

MARS, HERE I COME!



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Mars One è un progetto spaziale che realizzerà la prima colonia umana su Marte entro il 2023. L'addestramento inizierà tra 4 anni e il viaggio durerà 200 giorni. Di 200.000 persone che si sono presentate per il biglietto (di sola andata), un migliaio sono state già selezionate. Sybelle Silverphoenix (a sinistra) è una di queste, e qui ci racconta perché vuole emigrare dalla Terra. BY LORENZA CERBINI

B1 LOWER-INTERMEDIATE

GLOSSARY

- 1 taxpayer:** contribuente
- 2 insanely:** pazzescamente
- 3 at best:** nel migliore dei casi
- 4 huts:** baracche
- 5 pun:** gioco di parole
- 6 states:** stabilisce
- 7 unmanned:** senza equipaggio umano

It may sound crazy, but there is a plan to fly human beings to Mars. Not only that, they won't be coming back. The plan also involves colonizing the planet. Even more remarkably, "Mars One" (unlike the moon landing and other NASA projects) won't be financed by the American **taxpayer**¹. Mars One is a private venture, run by a 37-year-old Dutch entrepreneur called Bas Lansdorp.

RED ALERT

But whereas Richard Branson has booked the first seats for himself and his family on his Virgin Galactic "space tourism" scheme, Lansdorp will be staying at home. This could be because he needs to continue running the operation: this would be impossible if he were to migrate to Mars. Some cynics have suggested

that it might also be because he knows that it is **insanely**² dangerous, and that the chances of surviving a 210-day journey in space are **at best**³ limited. And even if the astronauts do survive the journey, they will spend the rest of their days living in high-tech **huts**⁴.

REALITY TV

The other great mystery about the project is financial. Lansdorp has announced that the mission will cost \$6 billion, but many critics have said that this isn't nearly enough. Where on earth (no **pun**⁵ intended) will he find the money? Apparently, the idea is to finance everything with a reality TV show. In any case, assuming that Mars One does actually happen, the "road map" for the project **states**⁶ that an **unmanned**⁷ mission will carry a Rover explorer and ☺



An artist's impression of an astronaut on Mars. The journey to Mars will take an estimated seven months, assuming that it does actually take place.

a satellite to Mars in 2020. Once it lands, the Rover will look for the best location for the settlement⁸. Two living units, two support systems and two supply units will be launched in 2022. They will be operational the following year. The first crew⁹ (consisting of four astronauts) will set off in 2023 and, all being well, will arrive the following year. New crews will join them every two years.

I HAVE A DREAM

So far there has been no shortage¹⁰ of applicants. New Yorker Sybelle Silverphoenix (see interview) recently learned¹¹ that she had got through to the second selection round, and she should begin her eight-year training programme next year. It may seem a strange choice for a woman who has an acting and modeling career, and who is the mother of a young daughter, but Silverphoenix says she has been dreaming of travelling in space ever since she was a child. We wish her all the best.

GLOSSARY

- 8 settlement:**
insediamento
9 crew: equipaggio
10 shortage: mancanza
11 learned: ha saputo

INTERVIEW THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Speak Up recently ran a feature on Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic space tourism project. But Mars One is far more ambitious. It offers people the chance to take the seven-month journey to Mars. Not only that, they won't be coming back: the intention is to colonize the planet. It sounds like pure science fiction, but Mars One will, in theory, become operative in 2024. New York-born actress and model Sybelle Silverphoenix (*below*) can't wait. She has wanted to travel in space since she was a child, and has already signed up¹. We asked her what sort of qualities the Mars One project was looking for:

Sybelle Silverphoenix

(Standard American accent)

Adaptability, charismatic, they want people to be able to adapt to others well, to work together, they want people to be curious. They're not looking for people who have a scientific background necessarily, or a background in engineering, or a pilot. They just want people who are excited about this, want to explore the opportunity, willing to be able to work with other people from vastly different cultures, to be able to get the job done.



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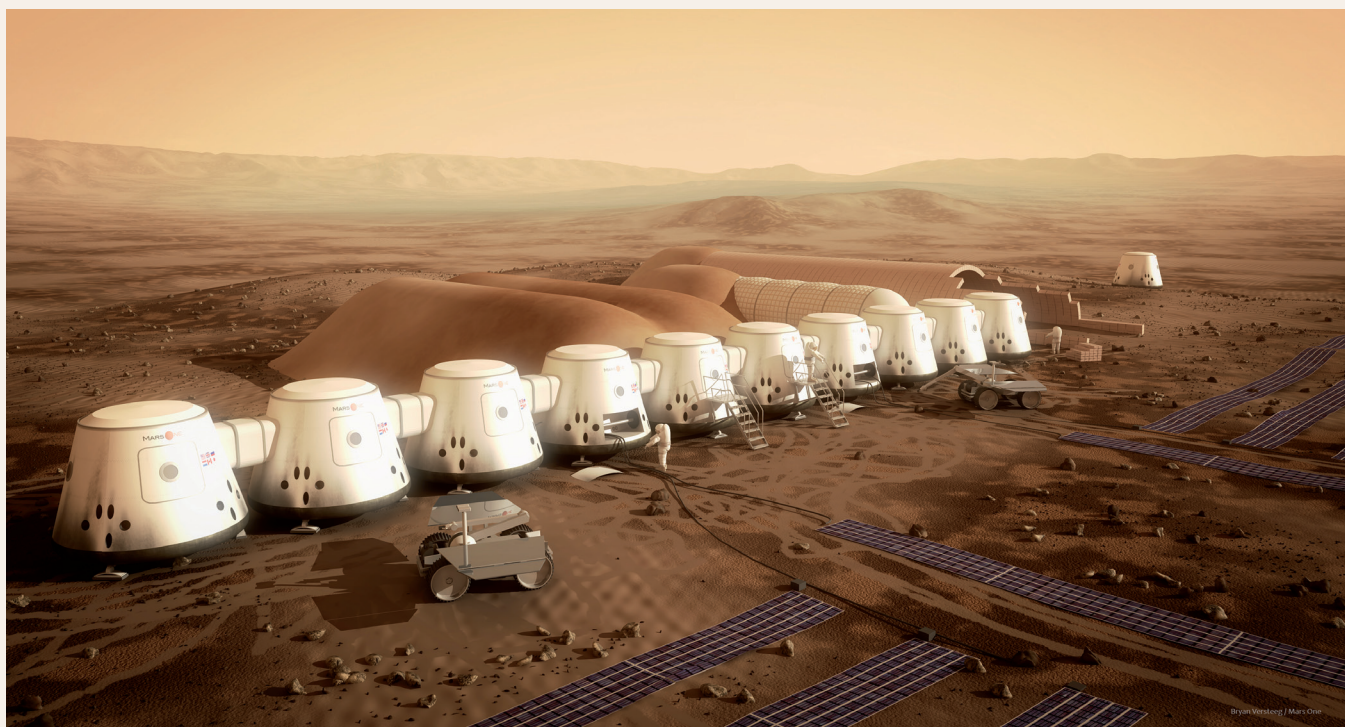
NEW YORK! NEW YORK!

And Sybelle Silverphoenix was accepted in spite of not having a scientific background:

Sybelle Silverphoenix

I speak three languages. I was born and raised in New York City, so I have been exposed to many, many cultures here. Many others who applied are just from one area. I have been able to interact with people from many different cultures: nothing will surprise me!

If Sybelle Silverphoenix does get to Mars,



then she will spend the rest of her life there. Isn't she worried that it might get a little boring² after a while?

Sybelle Silverphoenix

Well, considering how long I've wanted this, I don't know if I could ever be bored there! But for me everything would be like a test or an experiment. I would want to be exploring. One applicant said he wanted to climb³ Olympus Mons, the giant volcano on Mars, and this volcano is the largest volcano in the solar system! It is way, way larger than Mount Everest on Earth!

I'M A BELIEVER

And does she think that there is life elsewhere in the universe?

Sybelle Silverphoenix

Yes, absolutely! The universe is too large for there to not be extraterrestrial life. The probability that there is extraterrestrial life is very high. I mean,

An artist's impression of the living units on Mars. The Mars One project has received plenty of criticism, but then not everyone liked the idea of flying to the moon, at first.

there's already been well over 100,000 planets discovered within the habitable range⁴ of the stars that they orbit. So what that means is those planets may have liquid water, they may have an average of 72 degrees Fahrenheit⁵ temperature, they may have life.

But why does she want to abandon life on Earth?

GLOSSARY

- 1 **has already signed up:** si è già messa in lista
- 2 **boring:** noioso
- 3 **to climb:** scalare
- 4 **range:** distanza, raggio
- 5 **72 degrees Fahrenheit:** 22 gradi C°
- 6 **people are messing this planet up:** la gente sta rovinando questo pianeta
- 7 **where this is not the case:** dove questo non succede (v. Speak Up explains)

Sybelle Silverphoenix

I feel like, in terms of politics and things like that, that people are messing this planet up⁶! And I would like to be able to contribute in another area where we can, as humans, start over and perhaps create a culture where we are not so destructive and we do not hurt each other. And all of these things that go on here now with all these wars and how we mistreat people, and we don't respect each other. I would like to start something over there where this is not the case.⁷ ⊗

I would want to be exploring. Vorrei esplorare. Silverphoenix avrebbe potuto dire *I would want to explore* ma usa *the continuous form (be+ing)* per rendere più l'idea di esplorare attivamente.

The universe is too large for there to not be extraterrestrial life. L'universo è troppo grande per escludere l'esistenza della vita extraterrestre. *For there not to be* è la versione negativa di *there is* ma con l'infinito. La versione affermativa sarebbe *for there to be*.

People are messing this planet up.

To mess up è un phrasal verb che significa rovinare, distruggere ecc. Deriva dal sostantivo *mess* che significa disordine, pasticcio, "casino".

Where this is not the case. Questa frase è quasi un *false friend* perché non significa "non è il caso" che in inglese si può esprimere con *It's better not to*.

Speak Up
EXPLAINS