

World's largest plane close to flying

Stratolaunch Systems, the space launch venture backed by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, is planning to conduct the maiden flight of its giant carrier aircraft within the next few months

STRATOLAUNCH: World's largest aircraft by wingspan and largest all-composite plane ever built

Manufacturer
Scaled Composites

Construction
Mainly lightweight carbon-fibre

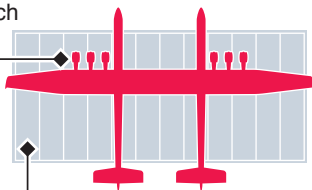
Reinforced centre wing
Has attachment point for carrying payload of more than 230 tonnes

Propulsion: Six jet engines from Boeing 747 airliners

Twin-bodies: Right fuselage for three crew, left fuselage contains flight data systems

Stratolaunch aircraft

American football field to scale



Stratolaunch specifications

Wingspan	117.3m
Length	72.5m
Tail height	15.2m
Max. takeoff weight	590 tonnes
Operational range	3,700km

MISSION PROFILE

1 Stratolaunch takes off carrying payload (satellite-bearing rocket) beneath wing. Aircraft requires runway length of 3,800m (12,500ft)

2 Plane climbs to its launch altitude of about 10,000m (35,000ft)

3 Rocket drops and ignites to begin ascent into orbit

4 Aircraft returns to base for reuse. Mission incurs lower fuel cost than launching rocket from Earth

