Prize AMA: I am Anousheh Ansari, the first woman and first Iranian to fly to space as a private citizen, not on behalf of a government. AMA!

ANOUSHEH_ANSARI R/SCIENCE

How did not having the backing of a government affect the trip/project? How regulated were you and your team from a safety perspective?

sabianaax99

It was one of the conditions. we didn't want Gov sponsorship so we would not be under the same policies that prevented the space program to become accessible to everyone. on the other hand we did a lot of work educating the policy makers about importance of a private space industry and were successful in creating a lot of new policies that has helped the new space age to flourish.

Do you think that sending the President of the Flat Earth Society to space would change his mind? And do you think that this would be a good way to challenge their idea?

Duvelthehobbit

I love the idea! He should take a selfie with the flat earth from space to prove it to his followers ;-) 

No questions, just want to tell you that you are a total badass and a role model for little girls with big dreams ❤️

katzetanzen83090

Thank you, katzetanzen83090!

Does it bother you that you can go to space but if you went back to Iran you would not be allowed to go to a soccer stadium because you are a woman?

Rich711

It does- I think it is ridiculous
Hello Anousheh, I'm halfway through "How to build a spaceship" and love the book! I'd never before heard of the Orteig Prize and its significance in bringing air travel to the masses through the spectacle of the race for transatlantic flight. What was your thought process in deciding to become the prize's benefactor and namesake and how do you feel about the results 12 years after its realization and the subsequent quests it's inspired like the Google Lunar XPRIZE?

froknowsthrow

I'm proud of it! we have kick started a 100+billion dollar space industry. It has been an amazing partnership with Peter Diamandis and the rest of the XP team and we are going to continue to solve the biggest challenges of humanity through competitions...

How did you start? What was your first step in going from nothing to your own company?

DoctorTJ

I decided that taking risk is good and wanted to try new things. First we started with Consulting - simple, no employees, just your time. However you learn about living in uncertainty. Then building a team of consultants and next building products we recommended and so on....

Hi Anousheh, thanks for being a pioneer & an inspiration!

Australia is now the only G20 & the only OECD nation without a space agency or program. Even New Zealand is forming one.

This from the nation that launched the 3rd satellite in the world into orbit. The same nation that was invited 3 times to join ESA & declined twice & failed to respond at all on the 3rd occasion.

Australia has had 2 Senate enquiries into the matter & both recommended forming a modest agency. Both enquiries have been thoroughly ignored.

Australia currently invests more in its national BMX racing team than in a space program / agency.

How would you suggest encouraging the Australian government & people to take Space Science seriously in this environment of apathy & ignorance? TY :)

dantejones

May be a challenge :) I think young people should put pressure on the politicians. Alternatively why do you need a gov space agency perhaps a modest one can be formed by interested citizens- not sure about all the regulation but I know a group of determined young people can change anything they want to.

What did you wanted to become when you were a child?

Sohkai

are you kidding? an Astronaut :) Specifically I wanted to be Ms. Spock. I wanted to be the Science Officer on board space ship Enterprise!
Which book or similar resource have been most influential on you?

neicdk

The Little Prince! by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Albert Einstein pursuit of unimaginable
Mahatma Gandhi's Life

Can you please explain the situation behind the Iranian flag? I read that you originally planned to have the flag patch but were told that you could not. Is this true, and if so what happened?

dareeza

I didn't and don't have political motivation that is why I had a version of the flag without the emblem, just the colors of the Iranian flag that has been there for centuries. I was told I couldn't wear it and had to remove it from my training suite because Iran was not part of the ISS nations. P.S...Don't tell anyone but I did have the flag on my flight suit on the station and I was wearing it on all interviews and the world is still turning! Amazing! The story is in my book "My dream of Stars"

What advice do you wish someone had given you as a young woman?

GoodGirl1Gon3Bad

Don't be shy! Also, don't believe in the limiting thoughts us humans sometimes have. We are our own worst enemy- sometime by believing in our fears and limitations our world puts on us.

This is a super exciting AMA!

With SpaceX initiating their first steps sending a manned flight to mars within the past couple of days with the raptor rockets. Realistically how long do you think until we have a human walking on the red planet?

Edit: 16 hours of coding in python and c#. I hope the question makes sense. I'm exhausted

Mr_Nukka

I think this is a great step in the right direction but we have many challenges to overcome. I hope missions to mars becomes more of a collaborative effort to spread the risk and chances of success. My best guess would be 10-15 years but I hope sooner. Having Elon eying Mars will not hurt ;)

The world is waiting for an international body that is not tied to nations, but one where community-minded and wise persons gather to stop wars, terrorism and other forms of predation.

Do you think we have a chance for such to happen in our lifetimes?

widowdogood

i hope so. i am counting on our young generation to make it happen. I don't know if it happens in my lifetime but I am for ever optimist.

Would you say that you've always had a passion for space flight? Or was this more of an adventure
you were able to fulfill like a check off of a bucket list?

What was the training before your flight like and how long before the flight date did you have to train?

I desperately wanted to attend Nasa Space Camp as a kid and unfortunately, my parents couldn't afford it. Anything you would like to share about your flight training would be awesome.

Anglaceandwhiskey

I wanted to go to space since I was 6 years old. I never knew how because I was living in Iran but I just knew I would find a way. I even prayed for aliens to abduct me :) I had to go through the regular cosmonaut training in Russia since I flew with the Russian space agency. I spent a year preparing for the flight in Star City, Russia. It will take too long to tell you about the training but I wrote extensively about it in my book "My Dream of Starts"

Check it out here: https://www.amazon.com/My-Dream-Stars-Daughter-Pioneer/dp/0230112218

Any advice you would give to aspiring space enthusiasts?

Also I think that you are a total badass!

OMickeyusofine

Keep visualizing yourself flying in space - and believe you will fully do it.

Study hard in the field of Math and Science. Engage in the best Space organizations and participate in their events because you never know who you will meet and how they may help connect the dots that takes you to space.

If you could go on any space mission, past or future, which one would you go on?

spoona96

Past - Apollo 11, Future - first settlement on Moon - building the Moon station First long duration mission on the first warp drive spaceship.

What drew you toward space?

N301CF

the mystery of the black skies - the unknown - the infinite universe that we live in.

How did you start Telecom Technologies with nothing?

DoltEnqi

401K savings and credit card debt :)

If you could safely visit any planet in the Solar System for sightseeing, which one would you choose?

TheStradivarius
At this time I like to go to Europa, one of Jupiter's moon.

Describe the feeling when seeing the Earth for the first time through the windows of the space station.

q120

It was overwhelming - emotional - joyful - awe inspiring.

I felt an incredible warmth and life emanating from our planet. The blue, white, and green colors, made it truly a unique sight against the dark backdrop of the universe.

Did you see anything unexplained while in space?

lubabe66

A little green man outside the porthole - just kidding :)

The beauty of our planet was breathtaking - I felt a life energy emanating from our world and I never expected it.

Hi Anousheh, I'm a Spanish-Iranian American Citizen and congrats on all your success! You are an excellent role model for our future and I hope that there will be many more minds like yours. :)

I'm an agnostic and curious to know. My question is, and pardon me if I presume I'm not sure of your religious/spiritual affiliation but coming from a entrenched religious country, do you find there is conflict within yourself in what you do scientifically for the world?

drumkilla23

Science and spirituality for me are closely connected. I see a lot of patterns in the macro and the micro and the search for the unified theory of everything is a path to a spiritual world where everything is connected and part of one.

Could you tell us more about XPRIZE?

goo229

www.Xprize.org - the coolest organization in the world! - Where we use competition to solve the biggest challenges facing humanity.

Thank you for doing this. I would like to say that I admire you immensely.

MRH2

Thank you, kindly! Dream Big!

What do you think about the future of space exploration? How it'll look like in your opinion?

And I've learn that you may be a Star Trek fan? How Star Trek inspired you?
Thank you for your answers!

Sorry for my bad English...

**yapilot**

The future of space exploration has improved significantly in the past decade. There is a new wave of energy and enthusiasm, especially by young people. I believe the cost of access to space will drop significantly and that means new possibilities for people and business to explore space. I was a star trek fan and still am - I love all the technologies in the movies, from replicator (3D printers now) transporters, Warp drive to allow us to go beyond our solar system, and most importantly a world where earth is one the members of the federation planets. Where there is no concept of money, hunger, etc...

What was the most memorable part of the whole experience in space?

**imtalkintou**

Floating free form forces of gravity, watching the world turn beneath my gaze.

What did it feel like 10 minutes before lift off?? And 10 minutes before coming back down? Shits scary, Props.

**SweenCake**

Lift off- I had a flashback of my life and all the dots that connected and all the people who made it possible for me to be there. I felt Immense Gratitude.

Coming down- happy to see my family but at the same time depressed. Not knowing when I would be able to be close to my beloved stars.

Would you like to be a human settler on Mars?

**TheJackFroster**

of course! anything that gets me out of the 9.8 m/s²

One of the most important things for me is knowing that my niece can follow any dream she wants to no matter what. What advice would you give to me to help ensure she gets the opportunities she deserves? What changes should I try to promote in society/government?

PS Thanks for doing this AMA. You are a wonderful inspiration and I'm looking forward to see your answers.

**SomniaStellarum**

my education is one of the biggest assets i have. it makes me feel i can land on my 2 feet no matter what. The other special gift we have is our imagination. having an education system that is open and available to everyone, the encourages learning through curiosity and exploration and limitless imagination would give every young person a new perspective on our world and how they can make it better.
What do you think of the Google Lunar XPRIZE? Are you excited about it? Anything cool people should keep an eye out for?

azerspace

I am super excited about it and have visited a few of the teams. There is a very promising team in India - inspiring a new generation of space engineers and scientists there.

Which is greater.....being CEO of Telecom or flying to space as a private citizen?

CaptainAchilles

I could not do one without the other

I'm interested in how you are perceived in Iran where women’s rights are severely restricted. How has this impacted on your choices and decisions in life? Would you call yourself a feminist?

behonourable

From what I can tell, I am viewed very positively by most Iranians. I have not been back to Iran and I hope to visit some day soon. Iran is home to millions of amazing women who are accomplishing amazing tasks every day, winning competitions, building companies, being race car champions, world renowned artists, etc. Women of Iran have the heart of a lion and they don't let obstacles stop them.

Right now I'm taking community college classes to get an associates degree in science, and then plan to transfer to a university (Embry-Riddle) to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering. If you could give any advice to someone just starting off on this education journey, what would it be? Everything is pretty much planned out, yet there's still that anxiety about "what next?"

gigabyte898

Just enjoy your time. It is not about degrees or grades. It is about knowledge and how you use that knowledge. Try to pick electives in interesting and completely diff fields, something you know nothing about. It will broaden your horizon. Be bold and don't shy away from big difficult things due to fear of failure. Be good to the world and the world will surprise you.

Hi Anousheh! I'm also an Iranian who have been living in the U.S for more than a decade. I have so many questions to ask you that I think it can take a full page on Reddit, but I'll keep it short and only ask two :)

1. In 100 or 200 years, the president of the US in 2006 will be almost irrelevant, but people will remember the first female astronaut who traveled to the space on September 18th to 19th in 2006 and your name and legacy will live forever. How does knowing that make you feel?

2. Did traveling to the space and spending 12 days outside of earth changed your perception about life and how little time we have on this blue planet?

Thank you for this awesome AMA!
I never did anything to be first and for a title. I would have done it even if I would have been completely forgotten. However, if I am remembered, I hope it is because I made a positive impact on the world, and not just because I was first. My experience gave me a new perspective on life and my relationship with everything around me. It gave a global perspective and helped me see what is really important in life.

How do you reconcile the difference in women's rights and opportunities in western civilization (female presidents and prime ministers, equal pay, equal voting rights, etc.) versus the treatment of women in the Middle East?

You are a successful business woman flying in space, meanwhile women there are still struggling to go to school and have some semblance of political power, all while avoiding the occasional acid to the face. It's a complete anachronism, is it not?

I lived in Iran until I was about 16. I lived through the revolution and the war with Iraq. I believe in Hope and possibilities. As long as we have hope we can live one day at a time and push ourselves out of every dark situation. I hope my story shows the potential of every woman given the right opportunities and nurturing environment.

Thank you, it's women like you that make me excited for my daughter growing up in this world. She's only 2, but any tips on achieving her goals in the future? Did you face any major obstacles? If so how did you work past them?

I always looked at the world through human eyes not a woman's. That has helped me set my path and stay the course regardless what others may think. Tell her she is amazing and she can do anything she wants to and sets her mind to it. Tell her she has super powers that she can tap into if she believes in herself and then everything is possible. Also please give her a big hug for me. Maybe she will be the first martian astronaut!

Do you intend on going back to space?

In a heart beat!

Did growing up in Iran influence your ideas of Western culture?

Yes positively. I think every young person in Iran wants to visit America.

As a commercial astronaut, what kind of conditioning or training do you need to accomplish before heading into space?
bloodyREDburger

I went through the cosmonaut training. You can find the details in my book "My Dream of Stars"
https://www.amazon.com/My-Dream-Stars-Daughter-Pioneer/dp/0230112218

How did your perspective on humanity change when you could see all we have inhabited at once?
Does the size of the oceans sink in differently?

zanthelad

You see a world without division, no borders separating us. We are all one form up there but we don't 
realize it here because someone drew these imaginary lines on a map and made us believe in walls.

Hi Anousheh!

How many cucumbers did you smuggle onto the ISS?

Seriously however, after achieving such an awesome dream, where do you go from here? What is the 
next big thing on your must accomplish list?

ltethe

This was not a bucket list item for me -and the first opportunity I get to fly again I will take. In addition, 
to being the CEO of our awesome new company Prodea Systems, I am working on building a platform 
for Youth with www.peacefirst.org to help them change the world.

first-challenge-sign-up/

Are you just a "passenger" or do you have any role in the flight?

wokcz

I performed 4 experiments for ESA and 2 of my own. I also helped the crew on their activities and did a 
lot of outreach with students all over the world.

What do you think of the relationship between Nature & Technology?

ExponentialTraveler

i think technology is just a tool that can be used for good or bad. it can save nature or harm nature 
depending on how we use it. i also believe that we can learn and get inspiration from nature. there is a 
whole new field of biomimicry.