

TRIP OF A LIFETIME?

ONE-WAY TICKET TO MARS

100 semifinalists are vying for a chance to live on the Red Planet—forever

"A reliable living environment will be waiting for the astronauts when they leave Earth," Mars One's website claims.



The volunteers: ready to leave Earth behind



KENYA ARMBRISTER, 36
"I want to inspire people to go for their dreams," says the California pharmaceutical researcher.



PETER DEGEN-PORTNOY, 51
"My wife is supportive," says the Massachusetts software engineer. "She waved and said, 'Bye-bye.'"



SUE ANN PIEN, 35
"I've always loved space," says the L.A. tech company manager. "I wanted to become an astronaut."



PETER FELGENTREFF, 50
"This is what I've been talking about since I was a kid," says the California tech executive.



KAY RADZIK WARREN, 54
The self-described "nerd" and Nevada project manager wants to "promote interplanetary travel."

It's the stuff of science fiction: An initial team of four earthlings boards a rocket bound for Mars. After a 140-million-mile trip, they land on the Red Planet and build a home there, spending their days conducting research and sending data back to Earth.

That unlikely scenario will become a reality if Dutch entrepreneur Bas Lansdorp has his way. Lansdorp, 38, sold his majority shares in his wind-energy company in 2011 to create the space-

exploration project he calls Mars One. Anyone who signs on has to *really* love travel: The chosen explorers will never return to Earth. "This is a mission of permanent settlement," says Lansdorp. "They go to Mars to stay."

Amazingly, 202,000 volunteers from around the world applied, and on Feb. 17 Lansdorp announced 100 semifinalists, including 33 Americans. The final 24 will undergo nine years of training before the first planned mission in 2024. Who will have the right stuff? "It's not about individuals," Lansdorp says. "It's about composing teams that can solve every challenge and overcome every dispute."

First, though, Lansdorp faces challenges of his own. Many scientists question the project's feasibility, and Mars One has yet to build a spacecraft or raise even a fraction of the billions of dollars needed. But Lansdorp is undaunted. "We have one huge advantage," he says. "Even our greatest critics secretly hope we'll make it."

By Steve Helling with reporting by Anne Lang



The trip to their new homes (prototype below) would take astronauts more than seven months.

