

## Lifestyle | Features



Fashionistas and influencers take pictures during an event in Istanbul.



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# 'Change the game': Supermodel Halima Aden reinvents modest fashion

**H**alima Aden, the first supermodel to wear a hijab and pose in a burkini, has ripped up her lucrative contracts in an industry she feels lacks "basic human respect" and entered the world of modest fashion design instead. For the Somali-American who was born in a refugee camp in Kenya, it was a matter of preserving her self-worth and well-being in a fast and loose sector that increasingly clashed with her Muslim values. "Since I was a little girl, this quote-'don't change yourself, change the game'-has gotten me through so much in life," she told AFP in an interview in Istanbul. "When I took the decision to quit, that is exactly what I did," she said. "So I am very, very proud."

Aden's departure last November delivered a shock to fashionistas and Muslim influencers who have admired her trail-blazing career. Aden, who turns 24 on Sunday, broke ground in Minnesota, where she became the first contestant to wear a hijab and a burkini—a full-body swimsuit whose appearance has stirred controversy on some European beaches—in a US state beauty pageant in 2016.

She posed in them again for Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit issue when her fame was spreading in 2019. But personally, Aden felt increasingly boxed in—sometimes literally.

"I was always given a box, a private place to change in, but many times I was

the only one given the privacy," she said. "I got to see my fellow young women having to undress and change in public, in front of media personalities, cooks and staff, designers and assistants," she recalled. "To me, it was very jarring," she said. "I couldn't be in an industry where there is no basic human respect."

### 'Poison!'

Aden sounded liberated when she announced her decision to abandon photo shoots and catwalks last year. She is becoming a designer instead. "Wow this is actually the most RELIEF I felt since I started in 2016. Keeping that in was literal POISON!" she said on Instagram. She felt her traditions, starkly different from those of most other supermodels, were caricatured and turned into a gimmick by some brands. One, American Eagle, replaced a headscarf with a pair of jeans on her head in a 2017 campaign.

"But... this isn't even my style??" she protested on Instagram at the time. "I got to a place where I couldn't recognize my hijab the way I would traditionally wear it," Aden told AFP. Aden looked far more at ease in Istanbul, surrounded by Middle Eastern fashionistas while attending an event organized by Modanisa, her new home. She will be designing collections exclusively for the Turkish online brand, which is one of the biggest names in the



Somali-American former model Halima Aden poses during an event in Istanbul.

modest fashion industry, valued at \$277 billion in 2019. It already makes up more than a tenth of the \$2.2 trillion global fashion industry, with plenty of room to grow, according to DinarStandard, an advisory firm specializing in emerging Muslim markets.

### 'Taste of the world'

World capitals as diverse as Moscow, Riyadh and London have staged modest fashion shows in the past few years. The trend is particularly strong in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, where Aden rejoices at the melee of cultures on the streets. "What I love the most about Turkey, especially

Istanbul, is that it is very diverse, you see women who don't wear the hijab right alongside women who wear the hijab," she said. "You get a taste of the world in Istanbul."

The industry has taken off in the past decade, thanks in part to the modeling careers of women such as Aden. Soft-spoken but smiley, Aden sounds confident in modest fashion's ability to withstand crises like the coronavirus pandemic and changing fads. "It is the oldest fashion staple, it's been around for hundreds of years, it will continue to be around for hundreds of years," she said. Islam and fashion "are 100 percent compatible because there's

nothing in our religion that says you can't be fashionable," she said.

Luxury brands such as DKNY and Dolce & Gabbana have already picked up on the trend, creating collections catered to modest women. But Aden hit out at "a lot of tokenism, especially in the fashion industry, where they want our money but they don't want to support us in the issues that we are faced with." "I think fashion needs to do a greater job," she said. "You are representing your clients who are Muslims, it is important to speak up when they are faced with injustices."— AFP



Fashionistas and influencers take pictures.



This screen grab shows the first all-civilian crew aboard SpaceX's Inspiration4 before splashdown during their return to Earth off the Florida coast.— AFP photos



This screengrab taken from the SpaceX live webcast shows Inspiration4 crew (from left) Christopher Sembroski, Jared Isaacman, Sian Proctor and Hayley Arceneaux in orbit.

## SpaceX all-civilian orbital crew completes historic mission

**F**our SpaceX tourists returned to Earth safely on Saturday after spending three days in space, successfully concluding the first orbital mission in history with no professional astronauts on board. The SpaceX Dragon capsule, whose heat shield allowed it to withstand descent, was slowed down by four large parachutes before splashing into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida at 7:06 pm (2306 GMT), according to a video feed by the company. "That was a

heck of a ride for us, and we're just getting started," billionaire captain Jared Isaacman, who financed the trip with a goal of making space a bit more accessible, said shortly after landing.

A SpaceX boat immediately retrieved the capsule, before its hatch was opened and the space tourists, smiling broadly and waving their arms in the air, exited one by one. They were next headed for

the Kennedy Space Center, where their mission had begun on Wednesday. The stated goal of the mission, called Inspiration4, was to encourage the democratization of space by proving that the cosmos are accessible to crews that have neither been handpicked nor in training for years. "Congratulations @Inspiration4x !!!" SpaceX founder Elon Musk tweeted after the landing. The four space novices—Isaacman and three other Americans—spent three days orbiting Earth, traveling farther than the International Space Station (ISS), at an orbit of about 575 kilometers (357 miles) high, and circling the globe more than 15 times each day.

Isaacman, who paid SpaceX tens of millions of dollars, offered the other three seats to strangers: Hayley Arceneaux, a 29-year-old nurse; Sian Proctor, a 51-year-old professor; and Chris Sembroski, 42, a US Air Force veteran. However, the exact price that the 38-year-old founder of

the capsule, spoke with actor Tom Cruise from the vessel, ate pizza and listened to music.

### 'Second space age'

"Welcome to the second space age," mission director Todd Ericson said at a press conference after the landing. With its completion, "space travel becomes much more accessible to average men and women." There was only one minor issue during the flight, with the capsule's toilet system, but a solution was quickly found, Ericson said, without giving further details. "Best ride of my life!" Proctor tweeted after disembarking from the capsule. The mission served as a huge fundraiser for St Jude's Children's Research Hospital, a leading facility in Tennessee. Arceneaux received treatment there as a child, and now works there.

The crew took with them various objects—including a ukulele, which Sembroski briefly played live from the vessel on Friday—that will now be auctioned off with proceeds going to the hospital. The landing marked the third time that Musk's company has taken humans to space and back, after the return of two NASA missions, one in August 2020 and another in May of this year. Both were bringing astronauts back from a stay at the ISS. Unlike NASA astronauts, the members of the Inspiration4 mission did not go to the ISS but remained in orbit around the Earth.

The space adventure comes after a summer marked by the battle of the billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos to reach the final frontier. However their separate suborbital flights only offered a few minutes in zero gravity. SpaceX is already planning further space tourism flights. In fact, "the amount of people who are approaching us through our sales and marketing portals have actually increased significantly," said Benji Reed, SpaceX's director of human spaceflight programs. The next trip is scheduled for January 2022, with three businessmen on board.— AFP

## What life is like aboard the SpaceX Dragon capsule

**T**he first space tourism mission by Elon Musk's SpaceX blasted off from Florida on Wednesday and the four crew members—a billionaire and three other Americans—have already seen more than 25 sunsets and sunrises. SpaceX has released few details about their adventure since they reached an orbit which is more distant than that of the International Space Station. Here's what we know about their life on board:

### Nine square meters

The four space tourists are aboard the SpaceX crew capsule called Dragon. It is 8.1 meters (26.7 feet) tall and has a diameter of four meters (13 feet). The capsule is composed of a trunk, which is inaccessible to the crew, upon which sits the living quarters. The entire volume of the capsule is just 9.3 square meters (328 square feet). Chris Sembroski, a 42-year-old Air Force veteran who is one of the crew members, has compared it to traveling with friends in a van—one you can't step away from though if you want to take a break.

### Toilets with a view

The exact technology behind the toilets aboard the capsule is a SpaceX secret. But Hayley Arceneaux, one of the four crew members, said in a Netflix documentary that the "bathroom is on the ceiling." "Really literally a panel that we take off and there's like a funnel," Arceneaux said. "There's no upside down in space." The toilet is located near the clear glass observation dome, or cupola, installed on Dragon, which provides a spectacular

360-degree view of the cosmos. "When people do inevitably have to use the bathroom, they're going to have one hell of a view," billionaire Jared Isaacman, the mission commander, told Business Insider. Privacy is ensured with a simple curtain.

### 'Eating, doing chores'

SpaceX released a video call Friday between the Inspiration4 crew and patients at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. The 29-year-old Arceneaux, who was treated for bone cancer as a child at St. Jude and works there now as a physician assistant, was asked by a patient what the astronauts do for "fun" in space. She said they have spent time "eating, doing chores and looking out the window at the world." Sembroski said they've also been doing "a lot of blood tests and glucose monitoring."

The astronauts were also asked what is their favorite "space food." "My favorite space food is pizza which I had yesterday and I'll probably have for dinner tonight also," said Sian Proctor, 51, who teaches geology at a small college in Arizona and was a finalist to become a NASA astronaut. Musical interludes are also planned. Each passenger drew up a 10-song playlist and Sembroski planned to bring his ukulele. The instrument and other objects are to be auctioned later with the proceeds going to St. Jude. The goal of the mission is to raise \$200 million for the hospital, with Isaacman personally donating \$100 million.

### Scientific research

SpaceX tweeted on Thursday that the crew had carried out a "first round of scientific research." One of the goals of the mission is to collect data on the effects of the environment of space on complete novices. Their cardiac rhythms, sleep and blood oxygen levels will be monitored along with radiation exposure. Their cognitive functions were tested before the flight and will be examined again on their return.— AFP



This image courtesy of Inspiration4 shows the Inspiration4 crew member Hayley Arceneaux looking out of an observation window while in orbit.



This screen grab shows SpaceX's Inspiration4 with first all-civilian crew aboard returning to Earth off the Florida coast.

Shift4 Payments and seasoned pilot shelled out for the mission has not been revealed. The Inspiration4 crew bonded over the course of six months' training, compared with years for professional astronauts. During the flight, the members' vital signs, including heart rate, sleep, blood oxygen levels and cognitive abilities, were monitored to study the effects of space on complete novices. But they also enjoyed the view through a brand new observation dome fitted onto

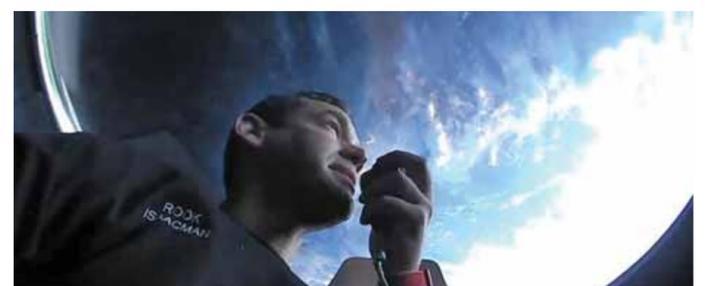


Image courtesy of Inspiration4 shows the Inspiration4 crew member Jared Isaacman communicating while looking out of an observation window while in orbit.