SpaceX Scales Back Plans for Starship's First High-Altitude Flight

A 50,000-foot trip won't be quite as ambitious.

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You might want to dial back your expectations for the first high-altitude SpaceX Starship flight. Elon Musk now says the flight with the SN8 prototype will top out at 15km, or close to 50,000ft, instead of the 18km and 60,000ft he'd mentioned earlier. It's not clear what prompted the lowered expectations, but Musk added that the rocket would get its nosecone and front flaps "next week."

He also showed current progress on the prototype, noting that the rear body flaps were already in place. An SN9 prototype is due in October.

Don't be surprised if that timeframe moves. Musk said on September 13th that he expected SN8 to be ready about a week from then, and clearly that didn't happen.

While a 50,000-foot trip won't be quite as ambitious, the goal should remain the same. SpaceX wants to show that Starship can perform more than short hops. If the high-altitude test is successful, it's much closer to providing a fully operational rocket. The company is betting its future on Starship in hopes it will enable space tourism and interplanetary trips, and that won't happen without major milestones like this.

> *Starship SN8 with rear body flaps pic.twitter.com/GdxMbzX0ct*
>
> *— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) September 26, 2020*

> *First flight is to 15km or ~50,000 ft*
>
> *— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) September 26, 2020*

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/356808