

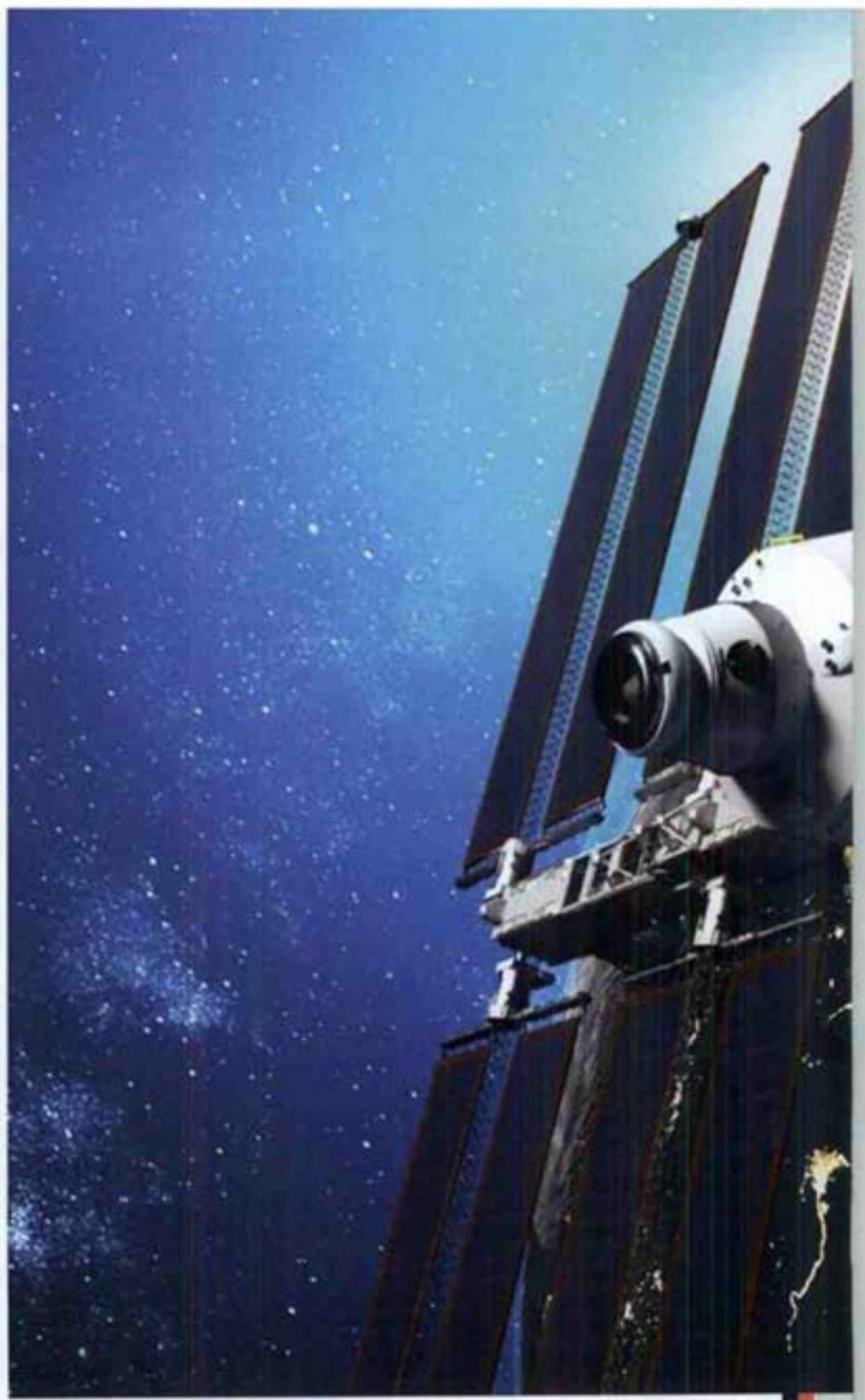
# Don't Call It A Space Hotel

Although you will be able to book a stay on the Axiom Space Station... for a price

BY TOM THOMAS BARRIE

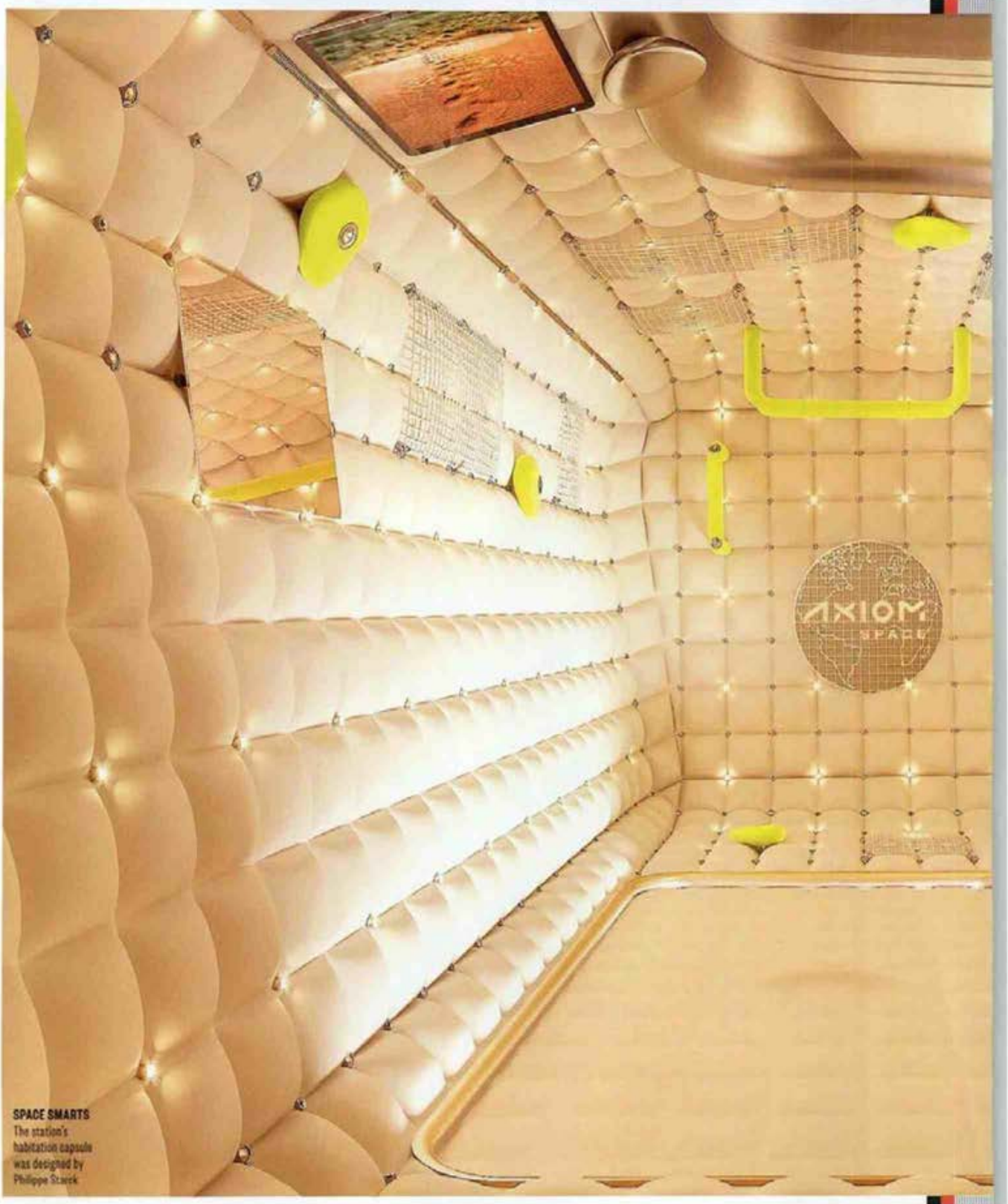
**FEAR NOT, TOM CRUISE STANDS:** the megawatt grin will remain safely here on earth, at least for the moment. There has been ample speculation that Cruise was set to board one of the first ever commercial trips to space, Axiom Space's AX-1 mission to the International Space Station, after the then head of NASA, Jim Bridenstine, announced, "Axiom is working with Tom Cruise in the making of a movie." Axiom has now announced the names of the three amateur astronauts who will travel into orbit sometime after January 2022 and Cruise was not among them. Instead, once their training is complete, three men – businessmen – Larry Connor and Mark Pathy and Israeli fighter pilot-turned-venture capitalist Eytan Scibbe – will join former NASA astronaut and commander Michael Lopez-Alegria to spend eight days aboard the ISS.

Axiom's mission is the next major step in diversification of orbital activity, which until now, has been largely government-controlled. As the ageing ISS is gradually decommissioned, its older modules will be removed and a series of new, privately >>

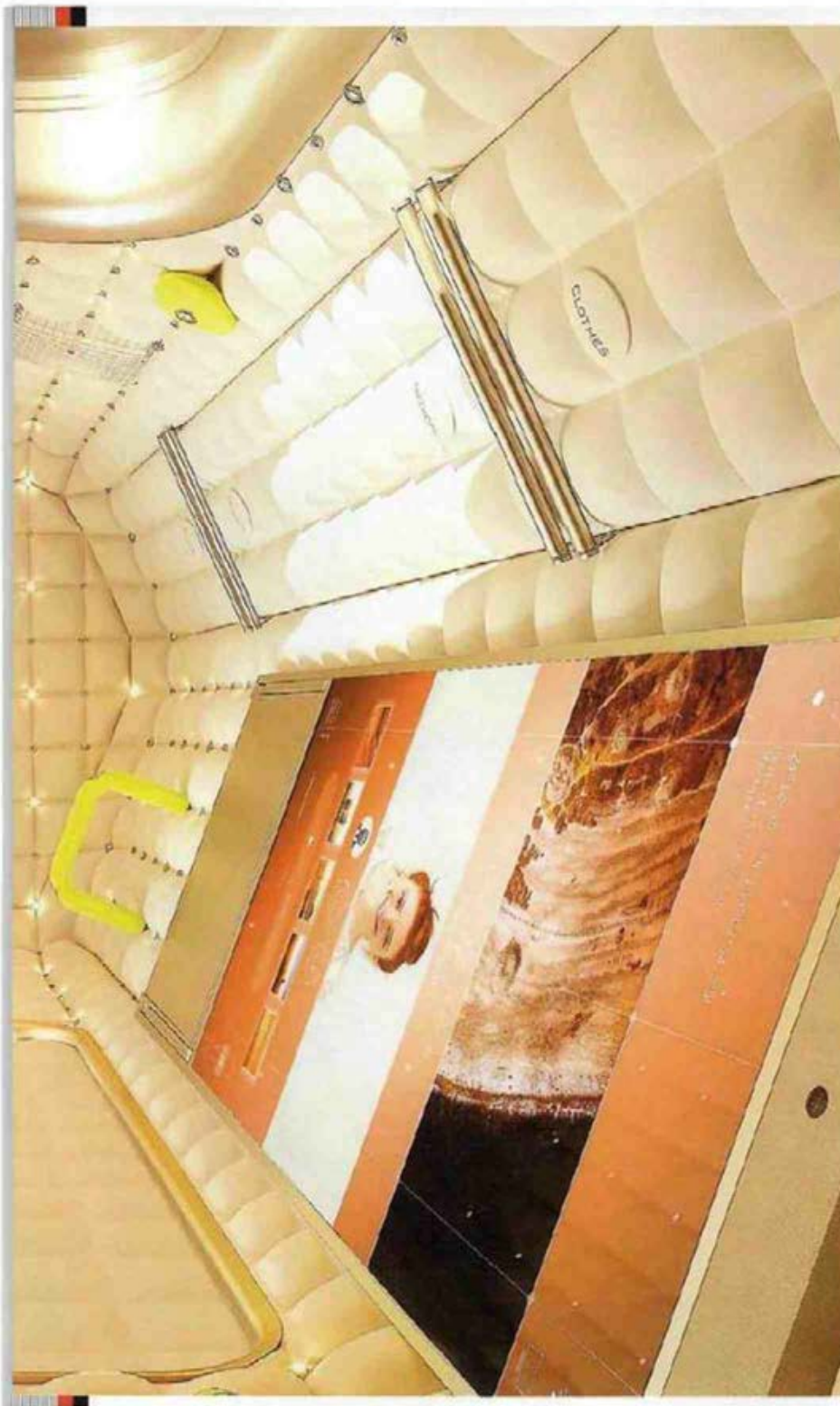




**BLAST OFF**  
The Axiom Space Station is expected to revolutionise commercial activity on low-Earth orbit



**SPACE SMARTS**  
The station's  
habitation capsule  
was designed by  
Philippe Starck



The station will also serve as a testing ground for future space exploration - trips to Mars, for example

owned Axiom ones added sequentially, beginning in late 2024. The first part of the Axiom Space Station, a module housing crew quarters and manufacturing and research facilities, will be attached to ISS that year, followed by three more modules with extensive research, life support, storage and manufacturing capabilities. "By 2028," says Axiom spokesperson Beau Holder, "the Axiom segment will be ready to separate from the ISS, when its lifespan ends, and operate free-flying into the future."

The effort to take individuals into space has led Axiom to be characterized as the galaxy's first "space hotel", given the 360-degree viewing pod planned for guests' use and the interiors designed by Philippe Starck. Holder says that it "is better described as the world's first commercial space station". Would-be "space tourist" join Axiom's mission in the understanding that they, too, will help carry out research while they're in orbit (how's that for "experimental travel"?). Axiom hopes the low-gravity environment can lead to scientific breakthroughs that would be difficult to realize on Earth.

"The station will also serve as a testing ground for future space exploration - trips to Mars, for example - to be carried out. If Axiom is to be believed, it's a vision of the future. But mass space tourism may be a while off yet; a berth on AX-1 is believed to cost around \$55 million. •