

Apollo 11 Moon landing: ten facts about Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins' mission

Ten things you may not know about the Apollo 11 mission of Lt Col Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin which allowed man to walk on the Moon for the first time on July 20, 1969.

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- As the Eagle landing module was descending towards the Moon's surface, Armstrong and Aldrin realised they had overshot the intended landing spot by miles and were heading for an area strewn with boulders. In manoeuvring to avoid hitting the rocks, they came to within a minute of running out of fuel for the descent and having to abort the mission.
- After the Eagle landed, Aldrin, a Presbyterian, recited from the Bible and took wine and a small wafer from a home communion kit given to him by his pastor.
- Neil Armstrong may have been the first man to walk on the Moon, but Buzz Aldrin was the first man to urinate there. While millions watched on live television, Aldrin relieved himself a tube fitted inside his space suit.



Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin talk to President Richard Nixon from their mobile quarantine unit onboard the USS Hornet in the Pacific Ocean Photo: NASA

- The astronauts had trouble planting the American flag in the Moon's hard surface, worried it would fall over on live television. As they blasted off, Aldrin later recalled, the Stars and Stripes flag was knocked over in the blast from Eagle's ascent engines.
- The mineral, armalcolite, discovered during the first Moon landing and later found at various locations on Earth, was named after the three Apollo 11 astronauts, Neil ARMstrong, Buzz ALdrin and Michael COLLins.
- When the astronauts took off their helmets after their moonwalk, they noticed a strong smell, which Armstrong described as "wet ashes in a fireplace" and Aldrin as "spent gunpowder". It was the smell of moondust brought in on their boots.
- After returning to the landing module, Aldrin accidentally broke the switch used to activate the ascent engines. After initial concern they managed to activate the switch using a ball-point pen.
- An estimated 600 million people watched the Apollo 11 landing live on television, a world record until 750 million people watched the wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. (Source: Guinness World

Records)

- After returning to Earth the astronauts were put in quarantine for three weeks for fear they may have brought back unknown pathogens from the Moon.
- The Apollo space programme cost was given as \$25.4 billion, around \$150 billion (£93bn) in today's money.
- One of President Nixon's speechwriters had prepared an address entitled: "In Event of Moon Disaster". It began: "Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay to rest in peace." If the launch from the Moon had failed, Houston was to close down communications and leave Armstrong and Aldrin to their death.

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