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Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter snaps its first images of the moon

By [John Matson](#) in [60-Second Science Blog](#)

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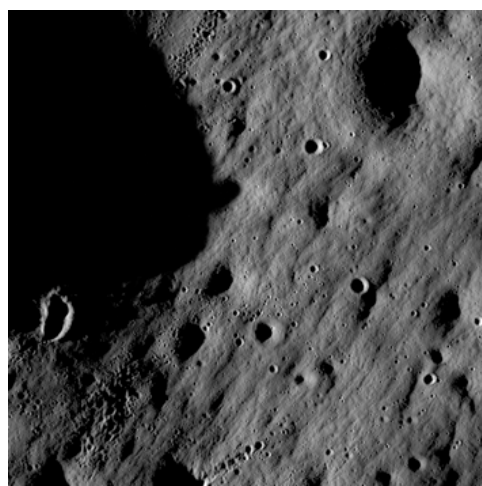


Photo credit: NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center/Arizona State University

NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, which reached its destination [just last week](#), is already showing its stuff.

The space agency switched on the LRO's cameras two days ago and today [released the first images](#) from the orbiter's mission, which is intended [to pave the way](#) for the return of astronauts to the moon.

The LRO snapped surface images near the Sea of Clouds (Mare Nubium) in the moon's southern hemisphere as day gave way to night. The intense shadowing caused by the sun's low angle makes for a dramatic moonscape that exaggerates the contours of the surface features.

The satellite's cameras will map the moon using [a suite of instruments](#) that will produce detailed (0.5 meter, or 20 inches, per pixel) black-and-white images as well as wider-angle color photographs of the lunar surface.

Both of the images here, which come from the LRO's high-resolution Narrow Angle Cameras, show an area 1,400 meters (0.87 mile) across.

The photos [above](#) and [at right](#) are available in greater detail on NASA's Web site, and [Bad Astronomy](#) blogger Phil Plait [points out](#) that a hyper-zoomable, scrollable image [is available here](#).



