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New Photos Reveal Apollo 11 at First Moon Landing Site

By SPACE.com staff posted: 17 July 2009 12:44 pm ET

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For stubborn folks who still believe the Apollo astronauts never landed on the moon, NASA has new images - definitive proof - that clearly show the Apollo 11 lander that carried the first astronauts to the lunar surface 40 years ago.

The images, taken by NASA's first lunar scout in more than a decade, the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO), show the Eagle lunar lander at Tranquility Base, where Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on July 20, 1969. They were snapped between July 11 and 15 of this month and released by NASA today.

"The LROC team anxiously awaited each image," said LROC principal investigator Mark Robinson of Arizona State University. "We were very interested in getting our first peek at the lunar module descent stages just for the thrill -- and to see how well the cameras had come into focus. Indeed, the images are fantastic and so is the focus."

The image does not reveal whether the U.S. flag planted there is still standing or not. Whether or not the flag will be visible in later images isn't uncertain, Robinson said, adding that he thinks the Apollo 11 flag was knocked over by the thrusters when the astronauts left the moon's surface.

The Indian and Japanese missions have also snapped images of the Apollo 11 site, but they don't have the high resolution of LRO's images, Robinson said.

The Apollo 11 landing site wasn't the only one that the LRO camera (dubbed LROC) photographed: It also snapped pictures of the landing sites of the other five Apollo landings. (The remaining site, for Apollo 12, is expected to be photographed in the coming weeks.) The lunar modules for all of these sites imaged are visible as small dots; their shadows can also be seen. A few more details can be seen in the image of the Apollo 14 landing site, taken only two days ago, including scientific instruments and astronaut footprints.

"Of course it was fantastic to see the hardware lying on the surface, and it was exactly as we expected it to be," Robinson said. "Sitting on the surface waiting for us to come back."

As LRO gradually descends to a lower orbit, the images will improve and provide closer looks at the lunar landing sites.

"This is only a first glimpse," said Michael Wargo, chief lunar scientist at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., "From now on, they're only going to get better."

The images of these sites are expected to show scientists how the sites have changed since the astronauts trod across them, whether there are any new craters and how the leftover human artifacts



In this image, the Apollo 11 lunar lander and its shadow can be seen in a view from NASA's new Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, which is scouting the moon for new landing sites for future astronauts. Credit: NASA/GSFC/ASU

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have fared in the lunar environment. And the pictures won't just serve as a record of our past presence on the moon, as scientists will be able to use the information in them to make topographic maps of the lunar surface at those sites.

About the size of a Mini Cooper car, the \$504 million LRO probe, an orbiting satellite, launched toward the moon on June 18. The probe is expected to spend at least one year mapping the moon for future manned missions, as well as several more years conducting science surveys.

Some people have questioned whether NASA really went to the moon or if the [whole thing was faked](#). No serious and level-headed historian, researcher or space industry analyst doubts the moon landings, however.

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DarwinLied wrote:

posted 17 July 2009, 2:01 pm ET

where is that ridiculous moon buggy at?

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StokedPacific wrote:

posted 17 July 2009, 2:18 pm ET

Thank you for finally ending this "debate" (more like a debacle). Maybe creationism will be the next crazy theory to go down in flames? Score one for science!

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HeavyChevy57 wrote:

posted 17 July 2009, 2:26 pm ET

DarwinLied wrote:undeniable proof that photoshop exist.

why so grainy and small? why do we have ultra high res photos from the MRO but the lunar one looks like it was taken eons ago.

you fail

You would look really small and grainy also if you were 30 miles up! Wait till they shrink the orbit down to 10 miles or so, I believe your eyes will be opened. Even Hubble, as big as it is cannot photograph the landing site to this resolution.

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HIGH_GuY wrote:

posted 17 July 2009, 2:27 pm ET

RedBirdRising wrote:

Had we faked the landings, Russia would have been the first to cry foul.

ME:

yeah, i agree. they were just wishing and hoping for us to mess that up.

DarwinLied wrote:

where is that ridiculous moon buggy at?

ME:

haha, was wondering the same thing. can't wait for a mars mission. we could use a mars buggy powered by a hydrogen fuel cell.

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stormhelm wrote:

posted 17 July 2009, 2:41 pm ET



now why would anyone be so stupid as to suggest all this is faked? people will be people just to be opposite! flag on mars? wont be u.s.
xoxo

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dubsdj wrote: posted 17 July 2009, 2:42 pm ET
I have been waiting for this for years and years. I was not lucky enough to be alive to see the landings on the moon but finally we can all see a piece of history with our own eyes. I'm really looking forward to the next photos in the coming weeks.... excellent!

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GetMeOffThisPlanet wrote: posted 17 July 2009, 2:59 pm ET
I'm sorry, but these images are not very good. I'm not a conspiracy theorist by any means but this would not convince me if I was in doubt.

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portugal wrote: posted 17 July 2009, 3:00 pm ET
The picture from the Antares landing module is very good. We can even see some of the antennas on the right.
The apollo XI is good... on the transmission Niel says that they have moved over a crater... and there she is on the left down of the rover. The big crater on the right is the one that Buzz and Niel had want to go but didn't knew if they got very near it when the earth control called them back because they were almost without oxygen to get back to the Eagle module? The buggy must be somewhere on the middle of that distance.

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superguy wrote: posted 17 July 2009, 3:03 pm ET
That photo proves nothing. The Apollo 11 mission may have landed on the moon, but there was definitely some footage shown on TV was certainly created in a film studio. Why can't NASA just admit that even if they did make it to the moon they obviously shot footage of a fake landing here on Earth before they went just in case? It would have been completely illogical not to have done so. Its also funny that these photos are just now coming out (after photo doctoring has become such an art that it is nearly impossible to tell if a photo is faked) and that NASA had apparently "misplaced" all of the original footage of the landing. Give me a break people, I'm not even really a big conspiracy believer but this one is almost so blatantly obviously sketchy that logic can only conclude that there is a higher probability of BS here than truth.

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InterestedOne wrote: posted 17 July 2009, 3:09 pm ET
This is crazy awesome yo! I feel all giddy inside looking at these pictures, they are good for my soul, lol. I can't wait for the closer views.

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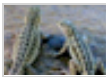
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