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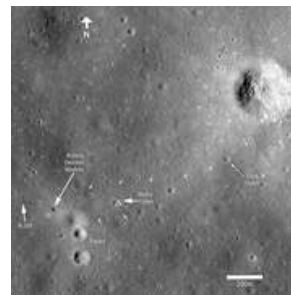


New moon photo reveals tracks from tough Apollo moonwalk

BY TARIQ MALIK • SPACE.COM • AUGUST 21, 2009

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A new snapshot from NASA's newest moon probe has revealed the 38-year-old tracks leftover from a grueling moonwalk by two Apollo astronauts who tried, and failed, to reach a tantalizing crater.



This annotated figure shows the positions of various landmarks surrounding the Apollo 14 landing site on the moon's Fra Mauro highlands as seen by the LRO spacecraft. The small white arrows highlight locations where the astronauts' path can be clearly seen. Credit: NASA/GSFC/Arizona State University.



An uncalibrated LROC NAC image of the Apollo 14 landing site and nearby Cone crater released on Aug. 19, 2009. The trail followed by the astronauts can clearly be discerned. Image width is 1.6 km Credit: NASA/GSFC/Arizona State University

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The photograph was taken by a camera on NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) and shows the terrain surrounding the landing site of Apollo 14 astronauts Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell, who touched down on the moon Feb. 5, 1971 in their Antares lander. It was released Wednesday and confirmed that the astronauts came just 100 feet (30 meters) from the rim of their target, Cone Crater, before they turned back, LRO researchers said.

At first glance, the image appears to depict a stark lunar surface devoid of any evidence that humans were there. But a closer inspection can reveal the glints of the Antares lander and a nearby experiment deployed by the astronauts, which appear at the lower left of the snapshot. The tracks from the boot prints of Shepard and Mitchell appear as wispy, winding lines that are a slightly darker shade of gray from the surrounding terrain.

The region of the moon explored by Shepard and Mitchell on the Apollo 14 mission is a rocky, hilly area known as the Fra Mauro highlands. The mission was the third of six Apollo moon landings between 1969 and 1972.

LRO has beamed home an earlier view of the Apollo 14 landing site, as well as snapshots of Tranquility Base, the first manned landing site visited by Apollo 11 astronauts on July 20, 1969. Researchers overseeing the probe's main camera, called LROC, from Arizona State University released the new images.

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The Hunt For Cone Crater

On Feb. 6, 1971, during the second moonwalk of their 33-hour stay on the lunar surface, Shepard and Mitchell tried to reach the distant Cone Crater in order to peer down at its bottom. The crater was nearly a mile (1.4 km) away from Antares - placing the lander out of sight for the moonwalkers - and the journey was exhausting since it was almost entirely uphill.

To make matters worse, Shepard and Mitchell had trouble walking uphill in the soft lunar surface and their map of the terrain left much to be desired.

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holeymoley99 wrote:

Messiah, what is as sad as being a hoax is NASA officials being so clueless with statements and so called photos then show a bunch of nothing. This just keeps conspiracy theorists alive and actually gives them more fuel. If you dont have photos that show anything then dont say you do. Dumb,dumb,dumb.

8/23/2009 1:27:00 AM

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bboaze wrote:

Walking over a mile away from and out of sight of the lander seems pretty dangerous to me. NASA allowed the astronauts to do some daring things back then. I wonder if the astronauts wish they could do more daring things today?

8/22/2009 8:25:21 PM

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messiah1 wrote:

I really hope it wasn't a hoax! That would be so sad.

8/21/2009 11:17:56 PM

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holeymoley99 wrote:

All I see is a bunch of craters, maybe those aren't the correct photos because they sure don't show any signs of astronauts. Let's give the people who dispute the moon landings more ammo and show pics like these. Again why don't we wait until we actually have something to show before sounding off on it. Just doesn't make sense.

8/21/2009 11:09:25 PM

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GI_MP_VET wrote:

It was planted...
lol!!!

8/21/2009 10:01:22 PM

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