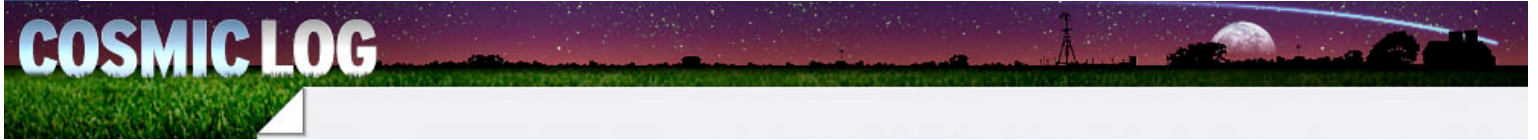




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## ABOUT COSMIC LOG

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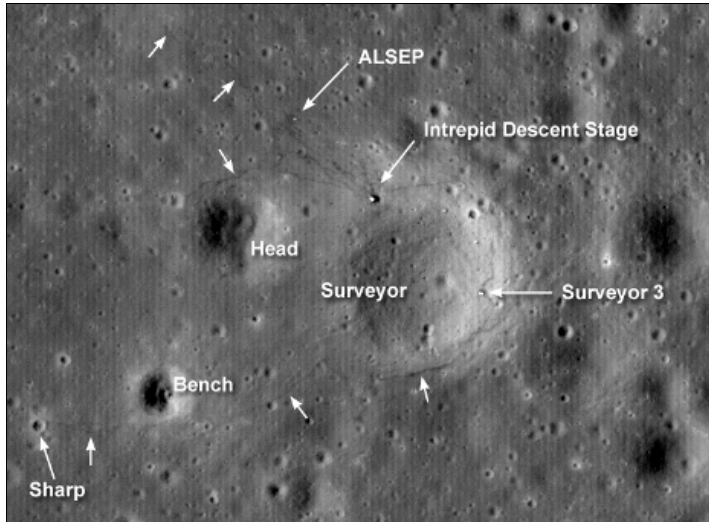


Alan Boyle covers the physical sciences, anthropology, technological innovation and space science and exploration for MSNBC.com. He is a winner of the [AAAS Science Journalism Award](#), the [NASW Science-in-Society Award](#) and other honors; a contributor to "[A Field Guide for Science Writers](#)"; and a member of the board of the [Council for the Advancement of Science Writing](#).

Check out Boyle's [biography](#) or send a message to Cosmic Log via [cosmiclog@msnbc.com](mailto:cosmiclog@msnbc.com).

## Space shots revisited

**Posted: Friday, September 04, 2009 7:10 PM by Alan Boyle**

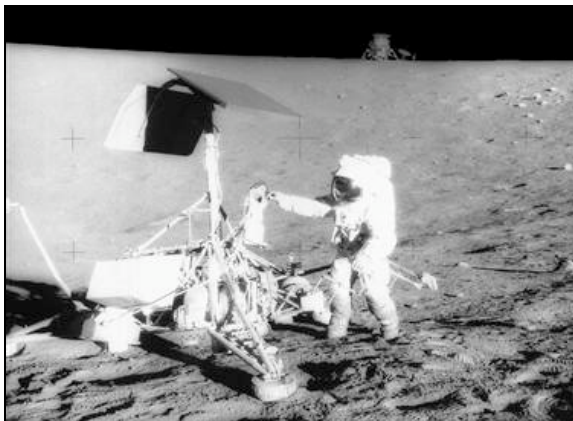


NASA / ASU

This image from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter shows the Apollo 12 landing site (with the Intrepid descent stage) as well as the Surveyor 3 lander, the ALSEP experiment package and tracks leading to other surrounding points of interest.

Broader views of the universe are among the richest payoffs to result from space exploration, as demonstrated by the latest installment of "[Month in Space Pictures.](#)" But those views becomes even richer when you see them from a completely different perspective. Some of the latest gems from space do just that, energizing scientific sleuths and confounding conspiracy theorists in the process.

Here's a quick sampling of completely different perspectives to peruse during the long Labor Day weekend:



NASA

A picture from the Apollo 12 mission in 1969 shows commander Pete Conrad alongside the Surveyor 3 probe, with the Intrepid lunar module on the horizon. New imagery from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter shows the scene as it looks today.

### Revisiting past space shots

- Apollo 12 and Surveyor 3 spotted:** One of the interesting things about the Apollo 12 mission, which will be the focus of 40th-anniversary remembrances in November, is that the Intrepid lunar module touched down within walking distance of the unmanned Surveyor 3 probe. The touchdown demonstrated that NASA could make something close to a precision landing on another celestial body. Now yet another unmanned NASA probe, Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, has taken a picture of the [whole scene from above](#) - including Surveyor 3 in its crater as well as the Apollo 12 leftovers and the astronauts' tracks going back and forth. The amazing picture, released on Thursday, follows up on LRO imagery of [other Apollo landing sites](#).
- Apollo 15, too:** You'd think that all that orbital imagery of Apollo landing sites would have finished off any claims that the moon missions were faked - but some conspiracy theorists reasoned that if NASA could fake the original missions, they could fake the LRO pictures as well. To take this view, you'd have to assume that the LRO imaging team at Arizona State University and all the other

scientists working on the mission were in on the conspiracy. But now researchers from India have announced that their own moon orbiter, Chandrayaan 1, [took pictures of the Apollo 15 site](#) before [contact was lost](#). They say the pictures reveal the tracks of the lunar rover. "Happy now, you conspiracy retards?" Gizmodo asks in its [item on the imagery \(with labeled and unlabeled photos\)](#).

- **Spirit rover ... and Mars Polar Lander?** NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory is still working on its plan to [free the Spirit rover](#) from its [Martian sand trap](#). In the meantime, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has taken pictures of the probe and its surroundings near the Home Plate plateau from high above. The Planetary Society's Emily Lakdawalla drills deep into the imagery to point out [the rover and its tracks](#). Emily and others are also working mightily to look for traces of the long-lost [Mars Polar Lander](#) in MRO imagery.
- **Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter:** NASA's eye in the Martian sky is [currently in precautionary safe mode](#) due to some technical glitches, but this week the team behind MRO's High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment, or HiRISE, released [more than 1,500 pictures](#) recorded between April and August. There's a [special section](#) for the September data dump, or you can graze through the [full HiRISE catalog](#).
- **Neptunian moon spotted by Voyager:** Philosophy professor (and amateur imaging whiz) [Ted Stryk](#) found a golden oldie in 20-year-old imagery from the Voyager 2 mission: a [sequence of pictures](#) showing the tiny moon Despina and its shadow passing over Neptune's disk. Another amateur astronomer, Tony Farkas, turned up the coolness dial by converting that sequence into an [animated image](#).

### Moving sights from the cosmos

- **Asteroid with two moons:** While we're on the subject of animated images, check [out this view of the asteroid 1994 CC](#), which has not just one but two tiny moons. NASA's [Jet Propulsion Laboratory reports](#) that 1994 CC is only the second triple-asteroid system to be discovered in the near-Earth population.
- **Eclipses on other worlds:** I love to watch eclipses on other worlds, such as [this view of a partial solar eclipse](#) as seen by NASA's Opportunity rover on Mars (involving Deimos). [Here's a short video clip](#) showing several solar eclipses, starring Phobos as well as Deimos, and [here's a "lunar eclipse"](#) in which Mars' shadow blots out Phobos. All this is a buildup to last month's [unusual eclipse clip](#), showing the shadow of one Jovian moon (Io) passing over the surface of a sister moon (Ganymede). Astroengine's Ian O'Neill also links to a [subtler video](#) that shows Ganymede blotting out Io.
- **Saturn's moons on the move:** Emily Lakdawalla's [roundup of imagery](#) featuring Saturnian moons includes some must-see animations, including shadows of Saturn's rings passing over Janus and Epimetheus, plus some interplay between Saturn's F-ring and the shepherd moons Prometheus and Pandora. [Here's the larger version](#) of Mike Malaska's animation, created from images sent back last month by the Cassini orbiter.
- **Virtual telescopes:** This week I got a look at the latest release of [WorldWide Telescope](#), the free astronomy program produced by Microsoft Research. (Msnbc.com is a Microsoft-NBC Universal joint venture.) This ["Aphelion" release](#) draws upon data from the Galaxy Zoo project to add realism to its 3-D renderings of galaxies and provides a wide-scale look at the universe that meshes quite well with the ["cosmic web"](#) we've come to know and love. "You now have this crispness to the way the universe shapes itself," WWT co-creator Jonathan Fay told me. Other features make the software more valuable for professional astronomers. "It's not just a curiosity," Fay said. "You could actually use it to follow up on scientific research." Stay tuned for more about WWT and other astronomy programs such as [Sky in Google Earth](#), [Celestia](#) and [Stellarium](#) in the months ahead.

### Big pictures from space

When we publish our ["Month in Space Pictures"](#) roundup, folks usually ask where they can get bigger versions of the images for printing out or using as computer-monitor wallpaper. Click on the links to learn more about the latest, greatest images in [our Space Gallery](#):

- **Midnight ride:** NASA's Human Spaceflight Web site has a great gallery of pictures showing [Discovery's liftoff](#) and other highlights from the [shuttle mission](#).
- **Rover's stomping grounds:** Check out the HiRISE Web site or for the big picture of [Victoria Crater](#) on Mars.
- **Eye of a galactic storm:** The Spitzer Space Telescope's Web site has great views of the [spiral galaxy](#)

[NGC 1097.](#)

- **Psychedelic Saturn:** The Gemini Observatory tells you all about [this ringed planet of a different color](#).
- **Where there's smoke...** NASA has a [Web page](#) that features satellite imagery of the [fires in the Los Angeles area](#). More recent imagery shows how pollution from the fires has spread [around the globe](#).
- **Star foundry:** Click over to the European Southern Observatory's Web site for bigger views of the [RCW 38 star-forming region](#).
- **Disappearing act:** NASA's Saturn Web portal shows you in greater detail how the [planet's rings faded away](#) during last month's equinox.
- **Open for business:** Go back to the Human Spaceflight Web site for pictures of [Discovery's rendezvous](#) with the international space station.
- **Moon over Earth:** [This view of the moon](#) hovering above Earth's atmosphere is another gem from NASA.
- **Pingos on Mars:** Cover your computer monitor with what could be [Martian pingos](#), courtesy of the HiRISE imaging team. What's a pingo? [Glad you asked](#).
- **Three-ring circus:** The Solar and Heliospheric Observatory's Web site explains how three separate perspectives were put together to create [a picture of the sun](#) you couldn't possibly see in real life.
- **Storms get in line:** Check out NASA's Earth Observatory for more about the [GOES-14 satellite image](#) that shows tropical storms lined up across the Atlantic.
- **Full of stars:** The European Southern Observatory has more about [this view of the HD 87643 reflection nebula](#).
- **Great White North:** [The satellite view of Russia's Novaya Zemlya frontier](#) comes from NASA's Earth Observatory.
- **Seeking shooting stars:** [Here's a bigger version](#) of the Perseid meteor picture we published, and you'll find many more in [SpaceWeather.com's gallery](#).
- **Meteorite on Mars:** The Mars rovers' home on the Web has [this view of the "Block Island" meteorite on Martian sand](#) as well as [this closeup of the rock](#).
- **Farewell to a rocket:** [This big-picture view](#) of last month's Delta 2 GPS launch is so detailed you can see the crescent moon in the sky.
- **The sun in 3-D:** Get out your 3-D glasses for a full appreciation of [this STEREO view of the sun](#), taken from the SOHO Web site.
- **Clouds of creation:** You can learn much more about the "trigger-happy" [Cepheus B star-forming region](#) from the Spitzer Web site.
- **High above Mount Hood:** Go to NASA's Earth Observatory for the full-resolution view of [Mount Hood as seen from the international space station](#).
- **Hell in paradise:** The European Space Agency has the full story behind the [satellite view of the Canary Island fires](#).
- **South Korean liftoff:** The satellite launch may have [failed](#), but the blastoff made for a [fantastic picture](#).

Stay tuned for still more fantastic space shots on Wednesday, when the first big batch of pictures from the upgraded Hubble Space Telescope is [due to be released](#). (We were given a preview in July when the Hubble team shared [this picture](#) of Jupiter's Great Black Spot.) In the meantime, check out [our Space Gallery](#) for more of the universe's greatest hits.

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copy of my upcoming book, "[The Case for Pluto.](#)" You can pre-order it from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) or [Borders](#).

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## Comments

Hi Alan, great round-up of space events, really enjoyed reading through them all.

I was also especially happy to see you linked to my Astronengine post about the Io-Ganymede eclipse!  
Thank you!

Loving your work,

Cheers, Ian

[Ian O'Neill, Los Angeles, CA](#) (Sent Friday, September 04, 2009 8:12 PM)

Amazing shot with Surveyor. The LRO shows the crater and you can see what the actual scene was at the surface. It's incredible these guys landed on the edge of a crater.

**Thomas Ashby** (Sent Friday, September 04, 2009 9:49 PM)

Hello Uncle sam,

Is mother earth going to survive this global warming?

Free Willy

**Wilson R. Lopez** (Sent Friday, September 04, 2009 11:31 PM)

Great as always, however the "Farewell to a rocket" is incorrect. It was not the last Delta II rocket. It was just the last time a GPS satellite was launched on a Delta II. There are still seven more Delta 2s at least, two from Florida and five from California, with five additional rockets not yet sold.

**Anonymous, Cape Canaveral, FL** (Sent Saturday, September 05, 2009 12:07 AM)

You can clearly see a humanlike figure standing next to the uppermost dune in the top picture. Why doesn't this have a notation? This is just more proof of the interdimensional conspiracy that is going on. I would like to see someone disprove a "NASA" photograph's authenticity. To all of you non-believers open your eyes. To all of you Quarillions, I know your out there.

**Jared Jammison** (Sent Saturday, September 05, 2009 5:39 AM)

Great pictures Alan! I so enjoyed the quip about the spacecraft from India imaging Apollo 15 and Gizmodo asks "Happy now conspiracy retards?". Really stupid how some still think the Apollo landings were faked. Good to see so much space imagery come to light.

**Eric, Salinas, CA** (Sent Saturday, September 05, 2009 9:22 AM)

As I follow any new developments in the search of any future exploration and especially any future landing on the moon and the establishment of a base for the launching of deep space tours and explorations!  
I wish you all happy hunting!

**Yoram Arielli** (Sent Saturday, September 05, 2009 2:33 PM)

## SEND A COMMENT

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prevent all comments from appearing. We will only approve comments that are directly related to the blog, use appropriate language and are not attacking the comments of others.

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**Your name, city and state** (John Doe, Seattle, Wash.):

**Your e-mail address** (jdoe@msnbc.com):

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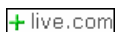
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