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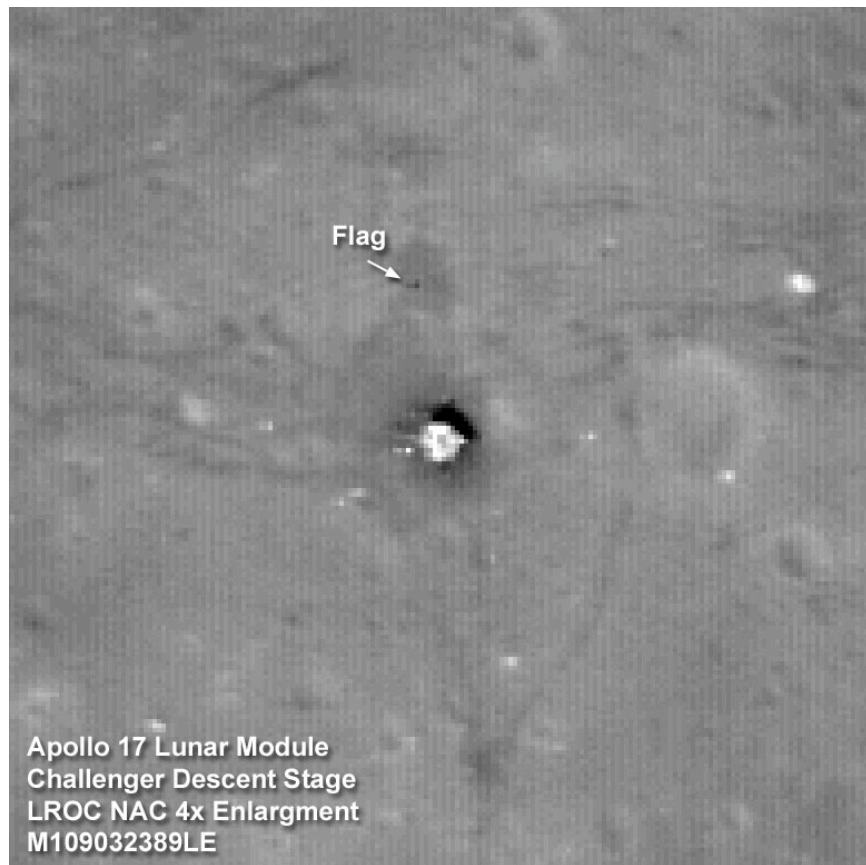
[LRO Takes Closer Look at Apollo 17 Landing Site](#)

Published By

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The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter maneuvered into its 50-km mapping orbit on September 15, which enables it to take a closer look at the Moon than any previous orbiter.



The Apollo 17 Lunar Module Challenger descent stage comes into focus from the new lower 50-km mapping orbit, image width is 102 meters. Credit: NASA

This also allows for comparing previous images taken by LRO when it was at its higher orbit. Here's the Apollo 17 landing site: just look at what is all visible, especially in the image below! These images have more than two times better resolution than the previously acquired images.

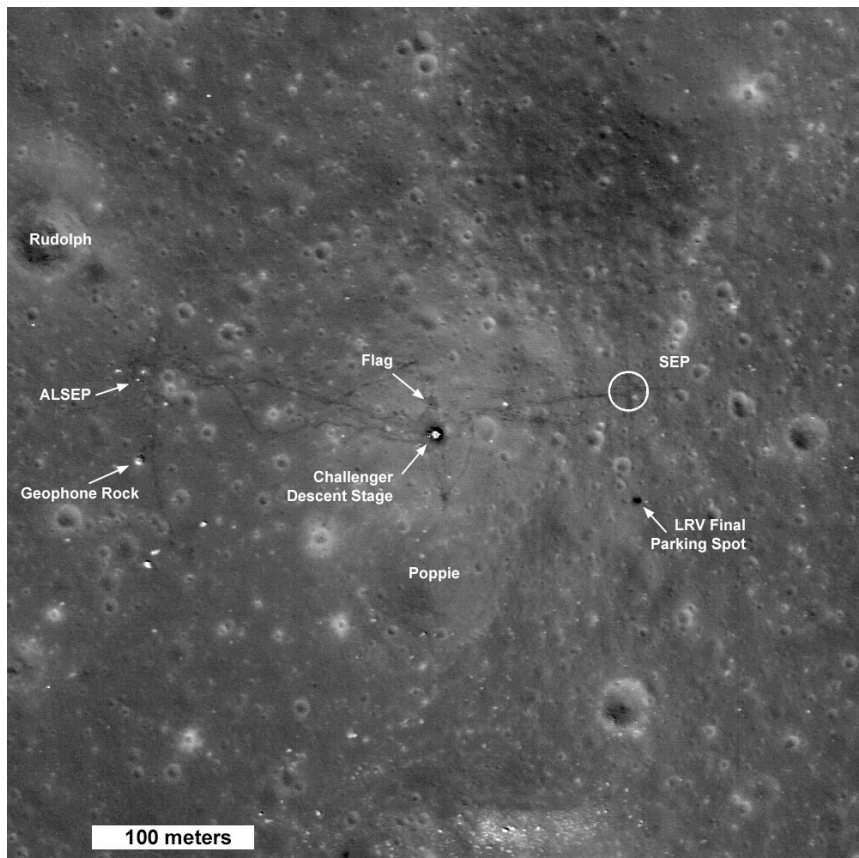
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Region of Taurus-Littrow valley around the Apollo 17 landing site. Credit: NASA

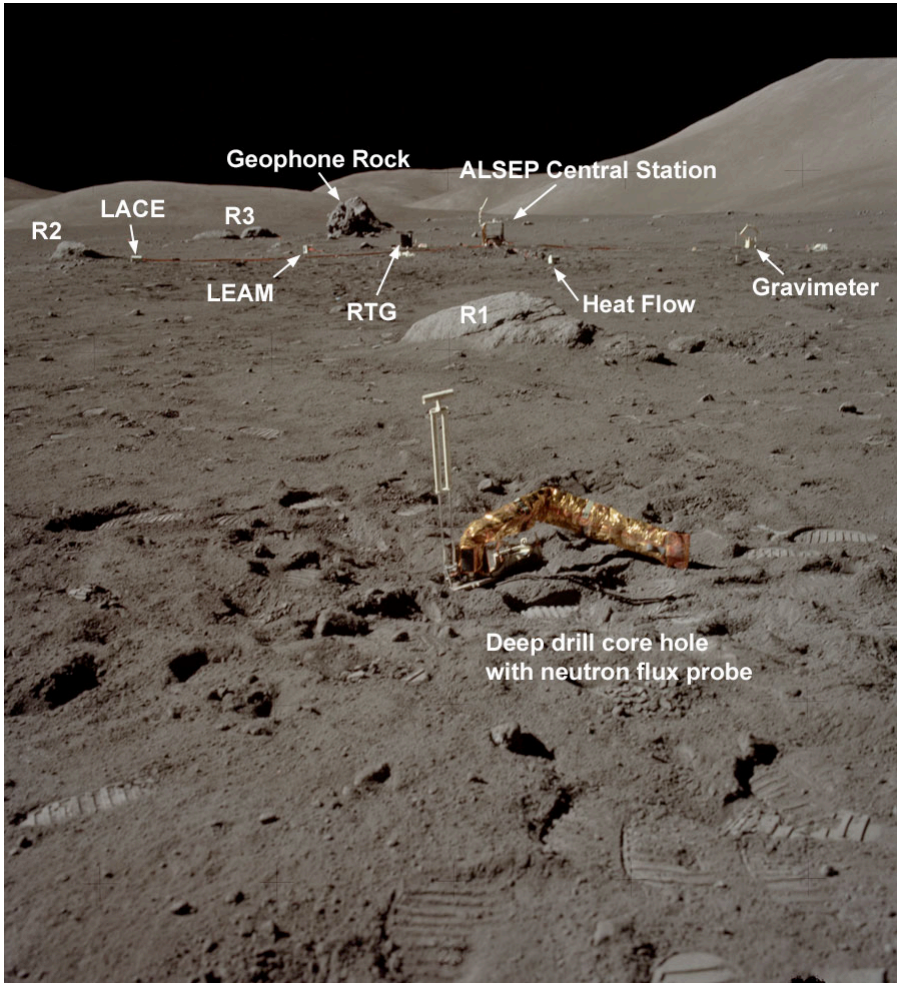
At the time of this recent pass, the Sun was high in the sky (28° incidence angle) helping to bring out subtle differences in surface brightness. The descent stage of the lunar module Challenger is now clearly visible, at 50-cm per pixel (angular resolution) the descent stage deck is eight pixels across (four meters), and the legs are also now distinguishable. The descent stage served as the launch pad for the ascent stage as it blasted off for a rendezvous with the command module America on December 14, 1972.

Also visible is the ALSEP, the Apollo Lunar Surface Experiments, which for Apollo 17 included 1) Lunar Seismic Profiling Experiment (geophones), 2) Lunar Atmospheric Composition Experiment (LACE) to measure the composition of the Moon's extremely tenuous surface bound exosphere, 3) Lunar Ejecta and Meteorites (LEAM) experiment, 4) central station, 5) Heat Flow Experiment, 6) all powered by a Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generator (RTG). Below is how it looked from the surface, taken by the Apollo astronauts.

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View of the ALSEP looking south-southeast. Credit: NASA

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1. ross426

Posted October 31, 2009 at 12:08 AM

BEAUTIFULL!! The lunar decent stage is soooooo cool to see (tremendous detail), as are some of the other artifacts (if thats the right term), but being a car guy, and seeing tire tracks from the lunar rover-well... it's just...I need a moment...too much! It's not a discovery or a confirmation, it's a reminder of what happens when so many dedicated, determined, brave, and imaginative people have a goal. What a hell of a goal! Thanks for that.

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