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Neil and Buzz's Playground: LRO Snaps Pic of Tranquility Base

By Brian McLaughlin ✉ November 10, 2009 | 7:30 am | Categories: Science and Education

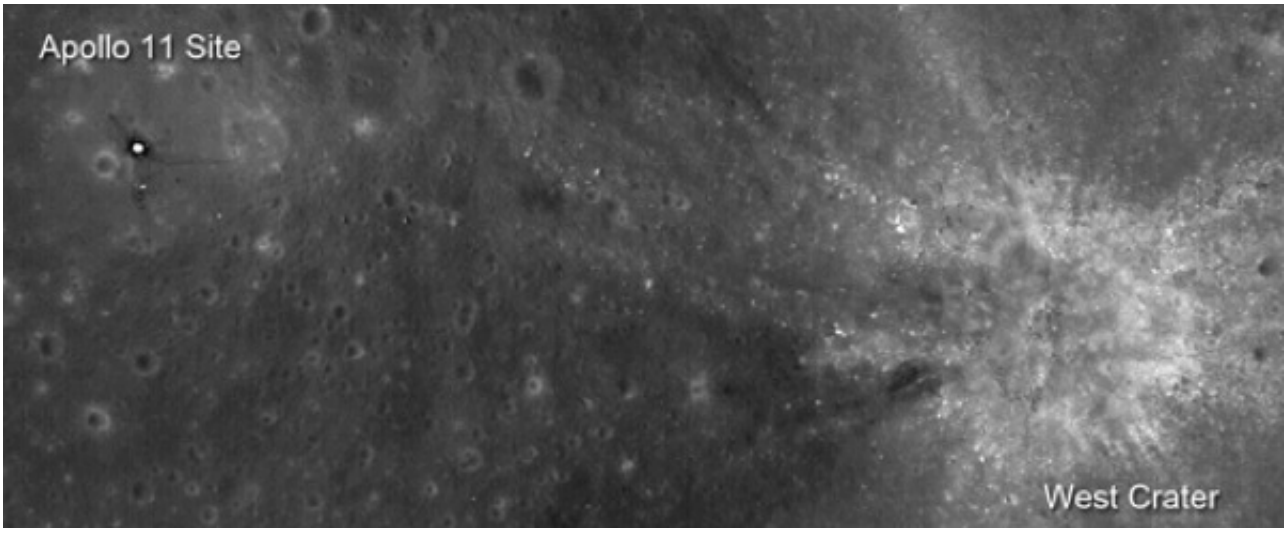

Image From NASA/LRO

For just over 21 hours in July of 1969, two men became the first humans to take a stroll around the Moon. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked around the surface of the Moon supported by Michael Collins orbiting in the Apollo 11 Command Module, a dedicated NASA crew back on Earth, and carrying the hearts and minds of the world watching live on TV. Everyone tuning in knew that this shared experience would be something they would remember forever and would be a pivotal moment in history. Now, 40 years later, this moment is still remembered by much of the world but a generation that has no memory of watching the events unfold is growing every day and that generation, myself included, is raising the next generation. NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, or LRO, is providing an opportunity to refresh the world's memory and share, once again, in the amazing achievements of the Apollo program.

The LRO satellite was launched by NASA to provide new data on the Moon in preparation for future lunar exploration, including detailed imagery of the Moon's surface to help identify future landing sites. As a bonus, some of this imagery includes the Apollo landing sites. LRO has already captured several of the landing sites but with the satellite now in its mapping orbit, a mere 50 km above the surface, the images are stunning. NASA has just released an image of the Apollo 11 landing site in amazing detail. From the release website:

> At this altitude, very small details of Tranquility Base can be discerned. The footpads of the LM are clearly discernible. Components of the Early Apollo Science Experiments Package (EASEP) are easily seen, as well. Boulders from West Crater lying on the surface to the east stand out, and the many small

craters that cover the moon are visible to the southeast.

Additionally, there are detailed images of Apollo 12, Apollo 17, and many other lunar features. These images bring the Apollo landings closer than they have been in the 37 years since the crew of Apollo 17, the final Apollo lunar mission, left the Moon. Hopefully, bringing these achievements of the past into the present will help to inspire both the current and the next generations of scientists and engineers around the world.

Tags: Apollo, LRO, NASA
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