

China's second lunar probe enters moon orbit: media

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The launch pad at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Xichang, southwest China's Sichuan province. China's second lunar probe entered the moon's orbit, eight days after the Long March 3C rocket carrying the Chang'e-2 blasted off from the launch centre, state media reported.

China's second lunar probe entered the moon's orbit on Saturday, eight days after the Long March 3C rocket carrying the Chang'e-2 blasted off from the launch centre, state media reported.

The unmanned probe will start "scientific exploration activities soon," said the official Xinhua news agency, citing the Beijing Aerospace Control Center.

The Chang'e-2 will first circle the moon at a distance of 100 kilometres (62 miles). The plan is for it to drop into orbit 15 kilometres from the

moon's surface.

It will conduct various tests over a six-month period in preparation for the expected launch in 2013 of the Chang'e-3, which China hopes will be its first unmanned landing on the moon.

The Chang'e programme, named after a mythical Chinese goddess who flew to the moon, is seen as an effort to put China's [space exploration](#) programme on a par with those of the United States and Russia.

The first [lunar probe](#), launched in October 2007, was in orbit for 16 months.

Beijing hopes to bring a [moon rock](#) sample back to [earth](#) in 2017, with a manned mission pencilled in for around 2020, according to state media.

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