

China unveils photos of moon

November 8 2010



A Long March 3C rocket carrying the Chang'e-2 probe, set to go into lunar orbit, blasts off from its launch centre in Xichang in the southwestern province of Sichuan on October 1, 2010. China has unveiled photos taken by the lunar probe of the moon's Sinus Iridium, the area marked out for the nation's first landing, highlighting the success of the mission so far.

China on Monday unveiled photos taken by its lunar probe of the moon's Sinus Iridium, the area marked out for the nation's first landing, highlighting the success of the mission so far.

The photos of the moon's surface, made public by Premier Wen Jiabao, were taken at the end of last month by the Chang'e-2 [unmanned probe](#), the National Space Administration said in a statement.

Chang'e-2 was launched on October 1 and went into orbit eight days later. It was due to first circle the moon at a distance of 100 kilometres

(62 miles), and then drop into orbit 15 kilometres from the moon's surface.

The images of Sinus Iridium, also known as the Bay of Rainbows, show the surface is "quite flat" with craters and rocks of different sizes. The biggest hole has a diameter of two kilometres, according to the statement.

The bay was formed by a massive impact billions of years ago, and is considered one of the moon's most beautiful landmarks.

Chang'e-2 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 to 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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