

# NASA's Orion craft hits high point of 3,600 miles

December 5 2014, by Marcia Dunn

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A NASA Orion capsule on top of a Delta IV rocket lifts off on its first unmanned orbital test flight from Complex 37 B at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Friday, Dec. 5, 2014 at Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/Marta Lavandier)

(AP)—NASA's new Orion spacecraft has hit its intended high point of 3,600 miles above Earth, the farthest a spacecraft built for humans has traveled in four decades.

Now its dramatic trip back to the planet awaits.

The capsule reached peak altitude of 3,604 miles three hours after Friday morning's liftoff from Cape Canaveral on an unmanned test flight. It's the farthest a spacecraft designed for humans has flown since Apollo 17—NASA's final moon shot—flew 42 years ago.

NASA needed to send Orion that high in order to set the capsule up for a 20,000-mph, 4,000-degree entry over the Pacific. Engineers want to see how the [heat shield](#) holds up before putting humans on board.

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Citation: NASA's Orion craft hits high point of 3,600 miles (2014, December 5) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-nasa-orion-craft-high-miles.html>

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