NASA's Orion spacecraft back in Florida after test flight
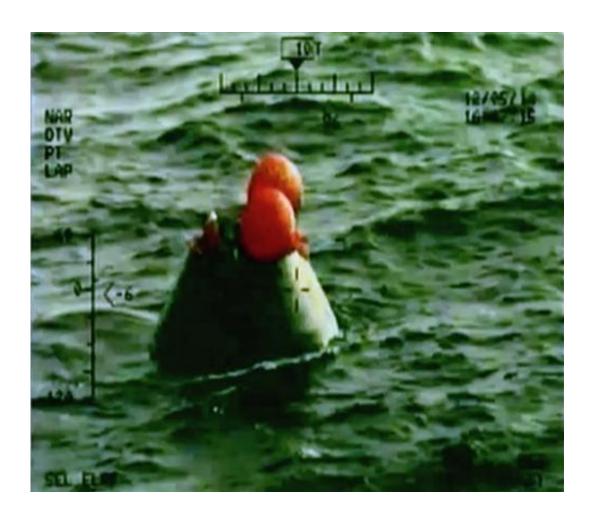
December 18 2014, byMarcia Dunn

In this Friday, Dec. 5, 2014 image made from video provided by NASA, the Orion capsule floats after splashing down in the Pacific Ocean, following a dramatic test flight that took it to a zenith height of 3,600 miles and ushered in a new era of human exploration aiming for Mars. (AP Photo/NASA)

NASA's experimental Orion spacecraft left Florida by rocket and returned by truck.

The capsule arrived back at Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Thursday. It rocketed into orbit Dec. 5, traveling 3,600 miles into space on an unmanned test flight that proved to be a great success. NASA plans to use future models to help get astronauts to Mars in coming decades.

Orion parachuted into the Pacific. After coming ashore at San Diego, the spacecraft was hauled by truck across the country.

Engineers will now begin the lengthy process of inspecting the vessel and reviewing all the data collected by sensors. The capsule was struck by micrometeoroids, but that was anticipated.

It will be 2018 before another Orion flies. This one will be reused in a launch abort test.

In this Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014 photo provided by NASA, The Orion spacecraft, in a protective covering, is returned to the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. It rocketed into orbit Dec. 5, traveling 3,600 miles into

space on an unmanned test flight that proved to be a great success. NASA plans to use future models to help get astronauts to Mars in coming decades. (AP Photo/NASA)

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