

Buzz Aldrin leaves New Zealand after South Pole evacuation

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Buzz Aldrin was discharged from a New Zealand hospital on Friday and appeared to be heading home, a week after he was evacuated from the South Pole for medical reasons.

Aldrin's manager, Christina Korp, posted a photo on Twitter showing the former U.S. astronaut relaxing and smiling on an airplane with the message "Bye Bye New Zealand! Hope to see you again! (But next time for vacation and not evacuation)."

Aldrin, 86, who was the second man to walk on the moon, said earlier he was eager to return to his home in Satellite Beach, Florida, to spend Christmas with his family.

The 86-year-old adventurer was evacuated from Antarctica last week after getting short of breath and showing signs of altitude sickness. He was flown from the South Pole to McMurdo Station, a U.S. research center on the Antarctic coast, and then on to Christchurch, where he was hospitalized.

Aldrin said in a statement last Saturday he had some congestion in his lungs and had been advised to rest in New Zealand until it cleared up and to avoid the long flight back to the U.S. until he was ready.

He appeared to be in good spirits during his time convalescing. His doctor was named David Bowie, the namesake of the late singer who was obsessed with space.

"You can't make this stuff up," Korp wrote on Twitter. Aldrin posted a photo of the doctor flanked by Korp and his daughter Jan, both wearing T-shirts saying "Get your ass to Mars."

While in the hospital, Aldrin was visited by NASA Deputy Administrator Dava Newman. And Korp noted that Aldrin had been "Resting but flirting with all the nurses!"

Earlier on Friday, Aldrin posted a tribute to former astronaut and senator John Glenn, who died Thursday aged 95.

"As I sit in hospital and just heard that my friend John Glenn has passed away, I feel fortunate to be recovering from my own illness, but saddened that we lost another space pioneer and world icon," Aldrin wrote on his website.

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