

Martian crater provides reminder of Apollo moonwalk

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Credit: NASA

NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity passed near a young crater this spring during the 45th anniversary of Apollo 16's trip to Earth's moon, prompting a connection between two missions.

Opportunity's science team informally named the Martian feature "Orion Crater." The name honors the Apollo 16 [lunar module](#), Orion, which carried astronauts John Young and Charles Duke to and from the surface of the moon in April 1972 while crewmate Ken Mattingly piloted the Apollo 16 command module, Casper, in orbit around the moon. Orion is also the name of NASA's new spacecraft that will carry humans into deep space and sustain them during travel beyond Earth orbit.

Opportunity's Panoramic Camera (Pancam) took component images for this view of Orion Crater on April 26, 2017. The crater is about 90 feet (27 meters) wide and estimated to be no older than 10 million years.

"It turns out that Orion Crater is almost exactly the same size as Plum Crater on the moon, which John Young and Charles Duke explored on their first of three moonwalks taken while investigating the [lunar surface](#) using their [lunar rover](#)," said Opportunity science-team member Jim Rice, of the Planetary Science Institute, Tucson, Arizona.

Rice sent Duke the Pancam mosaic of Mars' Orion Crater, and Duke responded, "This is fantastic. What a great job! I wish I could be standing on the rim of Orion like I was standing on the rim of Plum Crater 45 years ago."

Provided by NASA

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