

A European push to the moon

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Side view of the crater Moltke taken from Apollo 10. Credit: Public Domain

The European Space Agency is playing a vital role in humankind's return to the moon. In a few months NASA will launch Artemis I from the Kennedy Space Center. The uncrewed mission will carry NASA's Orion spacecraft incorporating ESA's European Service Module (ESM-1), built and tested by Airbus Bremen, in Germany, with the help of 10 European nations. ESM-1's main engine and 32 thrusters will propel Orion into orbit around the moon and return it to Earth.

As Artemis I prepares for launch, the second European Service Module (ESM-2) is about to ship to the US with ESM-3 also currently under construction. The second Artemis mission, however, has a crucial difference: it will carry four astronauts for a lunar flyby. ESM-2 will provide propulsion, power, oxygen, water and [life support](#) as well as controlling the temperature in the orbiting crew module. ESM-3 will go one step further and put the first person on the moon for 50 years.

Provided by European Space Agency

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