

NASA's uncrewed Artemis moon mission set to launch in February

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NASA's uncrewed Artemis 1 mission to the moon is on track to launch in February, the U.S. space agency said.

The Orion spacecraft was secured this week atop the powerful Space Launch System rocket at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, meaning the [mission](#) was entering its final phase of preparations.

For its flight next year, Orion will swing around the moon without astronauts on board.

It will be a critical test of the Artemis program, which aims to land astronauts on the moon by 2024 and establish a sustained [human presence](#) there by 2028, part of the U.S. government's ambitious efforts to get people to Mars in the 2030s.

Artemis has been hit by delays, and even top NASA officials have conceded that the targets will be difficult to meet.

A specific launch date for Artemis 1 will be set after "wet dress rehearsal," a test set for early next year in which the liquid propellants are filled into the massive next-generation rocket, which at 98 meters stands taller than the Statue of Liberty.

The United States remains the only country to have put humans on Earth's nearest neighbor. The last time was in December 1972 as part of the Apollo program.

The U.S. is looking over its shoulder at China, which is pressing ahead with a series of ambitious missions.

The country plans to complete its space station some time in 2022. And after several successful robotic moon missions it wants to send a crew in the next decade, according to reports.

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