

ESA names first 'astronaut' to fly on the Artemis I lunar mission

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Shaun the Sheep has been assigned a seat on the Artemis I mission, which will be the first flight of NASA's Orion spacecraft with an ESA European Service Module, planned to go around the Moon and back. Astronauts of all sheep and sizes must go through the same training, and here is Shaun on the special Airbus 'Zero G' A310 aircraft during one of its parabolic flights in 2019. These flights recreate 'weightless' conditions similar to those experienced in space. Credit: ESA/Aardman

A specially trained wooly astronaut, Shaun the Sheep, has been assigned a seat on the Artemis I mission to the Moon. Shaun's assignment was announced by ESA's Director for Human and Robotic Exploration Dr. David Parker.

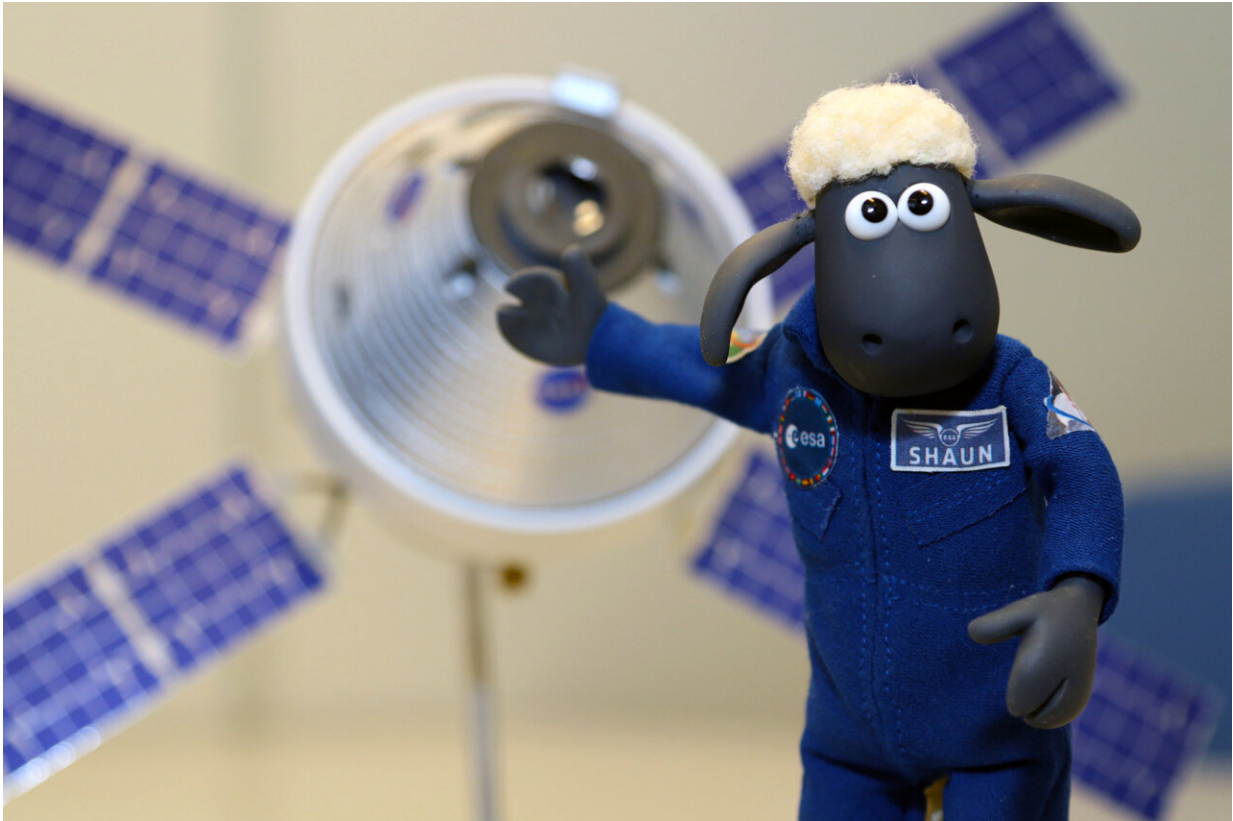
David Parker said, "Shaun's [mission](#) assignment rounds off the first phase for the latest members of our astronaut corps, with Italian ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti currently on the International Space Station on her second spaceflight, Danish ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen named for his [second flight](#) and before we introduce our new astronauts from the 2021 call for selection later this year."

"This is an exciting time for Shaun and for us at ESA. We're wooly very happy that he's been selected for the mission and we understand that, although it might be a small step for a human, it's a giant leap for lambkind," added David Parker.

Shaun will be flying on the Artemis I mission, which will be the first flight of NASA's Orion spacecraft with an ESA European Service Module, planned to go around the Moon and back. This mission is not carrying a human crew but will instead be controlled from the ground with its wooly specialist as a passenger.

Orion and its European Service Module will be launched by the Space

Launch System from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, U.S. The spacecraft will enter a low-Earth orbit before the rocket's upper stage fires to take it into a translunar orbit.



The specially trained woolly astronaut, Shaun the Sheep, has been assigned a seat on the Artemis I mission to the Moon, which will be the first flight of NASA's Orion spacecraft with an ESA European Service Module. How far will Shaun's career in space go? Only time wool tell. Shaun is pictured here in front of a model of the Orion/European Service Module spacecraft. Credit: ESA/Aardman

The spacecraft will perform a flyby of the moon, using lunar gravity to gain speed and propel itself 70,000 km beyond the Moon, almost half a million km from Earth—farther than any human, or sheep, has ever

traveled.

In preparation for this flight, Shaun began a program of astronaut training and familiarization with the Orion spacecraft and its European Service Module in 2020, traveling to various locations across Europe and the U.S. to see different aspects of the mission. This training was documented and will be presented in a series of ESA blog posts leading up to launch.

With a keen passion for exploring, Shaun took flight on the special Airbus "Zero G" A310 aircraft during one of its parabolic flights that recreates the "weightless" conditions similar to those experienced in [space](#).

Under the supervision of an ESA team, this flight prepared Shaun for his role as a space traveler in his film "A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon," released in 2019. It offered insight into the rigorous training that all astronauts undertake to prepare for spaceflight, which he will now experience for real.

Lucy Wendover, Marketing Director at Aardman says, "Aardman is excited to be joining ESA in making history by launching the first 'sheep' into space. As one of the first astronauts to fly an Artemis mission, Shaun is leading the way in lunar exploration, a great honor for our woolly adventurer! 2022 marks the 15th anniversary of Shaun's first TV series, so what better way to celebrate than by traveling farther than any sheep has gone before."

Follow Shaun's training for Artemis I and preparations for the first European Service Module [flight](#) to the Moon [here](#).

Provided by European Space Agency

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