

# Astronauts get first look at the spacecraft that will fly them around the moon

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Artemis II crew members, from left, Jeremy Hansen, Victor Glover, Reid Wiseman and Christina Koch, stand together at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, in front of an Orion crew module on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023. The U.S.-Canadian crew inspected the capsule during a visit late Monday and Tuesday. NASA plans to send the four around the moon and back late next year. Credit: Kim Shiflett/NASA via AP

The four astronauts assigned to fly around the moon in another year got their first look at their spacecraft, as NASA warned Tuesday there could be more delays.

They peeked into their unfinished Orion capsule, red "Remove Before Flight" tags still dangling from it, and came away impressed.

"Nothing else looks like that ... that's what gave me shivers," astronaut Christina Koch told reporters.

The U.S.-Canadian crew inspected the capsule during a visit to Kennedy Space Center late Monday and Tuesday. NASA plans to send the four around the [moon](#) and back late next year.

Investigations into the capsule's heat shield, however, could delay this first lunar trip by [astronauts](#) in more than half a century. Last year's [test flight](#) around the moon, with no one on board, resulted in unexpected charring and loss of material from the heat shield at the bottom of the capsule. The [heat shield](#) is meant to protect the capsule against the extreme heat of reentry.

The following mission of the Artemis program—a moon landing—faces even more hurdles and may slip from late 2025 into 2026. The main issue remains SpaceX's Starship, the rocketship that will carry two NASA astronauts from lunar orbit down to the south pole.

With only one test flight so far for Starship—resulting in an [explosion](#) a few minutes after liftoff in April—NASA is concerned whether Elon Musk's SpaceX can pull everything off in time. The [space agency](#) will not commit to a moon landing using Starship, until SpaceX conducts multiple Starship orbital flights, sets up a refueling depot around Earth and completes a moon-landing dress rehearsal.

NASA's exploration systems development chief, Jim Free, said the space agency should have a clearer handle on where things stand this fall.

"It's clear that we have a lot of work to do," said astronaut Victor Glover.

Despite such lingering worries, the mood inside the Neil Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building—named after the first man to step onto the moon—was upbeat Tuesday. The astronauts—assigned to the mission [amid hoopla](#) last spring—were asked what it felt like to be in such hallowed grounds.

Crew commander Reid Wiseman said it wasn't their own trip but the next [moon landing](#) that is "going to carry the dream for us."

More than 200 rock concert speakers were stacked around the capsule for an acoustic test later this week. NASA planned to blast the place with up to 143 decibels of rumbling noise—imitating the thunderous sounds of liftoff—to see how well the windows, wiring and other parts of the capsule hold up.

Gesturing toward the capsule, Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen said, "That's real ... It's not a dream."

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