

Moon fests, moon movie and even a full moon mark 55th anniversary of Apollo 11 landing

July 19 2024, by Marcia Dunn



A footprint left by one of the astronauts of the Apollo 11 mission is seen in the soft, powdery surface of the moon on July 20, 1969. Credit: NASA via AP, File

The cosmos is providing a full moon for the 55th anniversary of the first

lunar landing this weekend, and plenty of other events honor Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's giant leap.

Aldrin, 94, the last surviving member of the Apollo 11 crew, headlines a gala at the San Diego Air and Space Museum on Saturday night. He'll be joined by astronaut Charlie Duke, who was the voice inside Mission Control for the July 20, 1969 [moon landing](#).

Museum President Jim Kidrick couldn't resist throwing a bash "55 years to the day of one of the most historic moments in not only the history of America, but in the history of the world."

Can't make it to San Diego, Cape Canaveral or Houston? There are plenty of other ways to celebrate the moon landing, including the new film "Fly Me to the Moon," a light-hearted lookback starring Scarlett Johansson.

And you can explore all things Apollo 11 on a special [website](#) by the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.

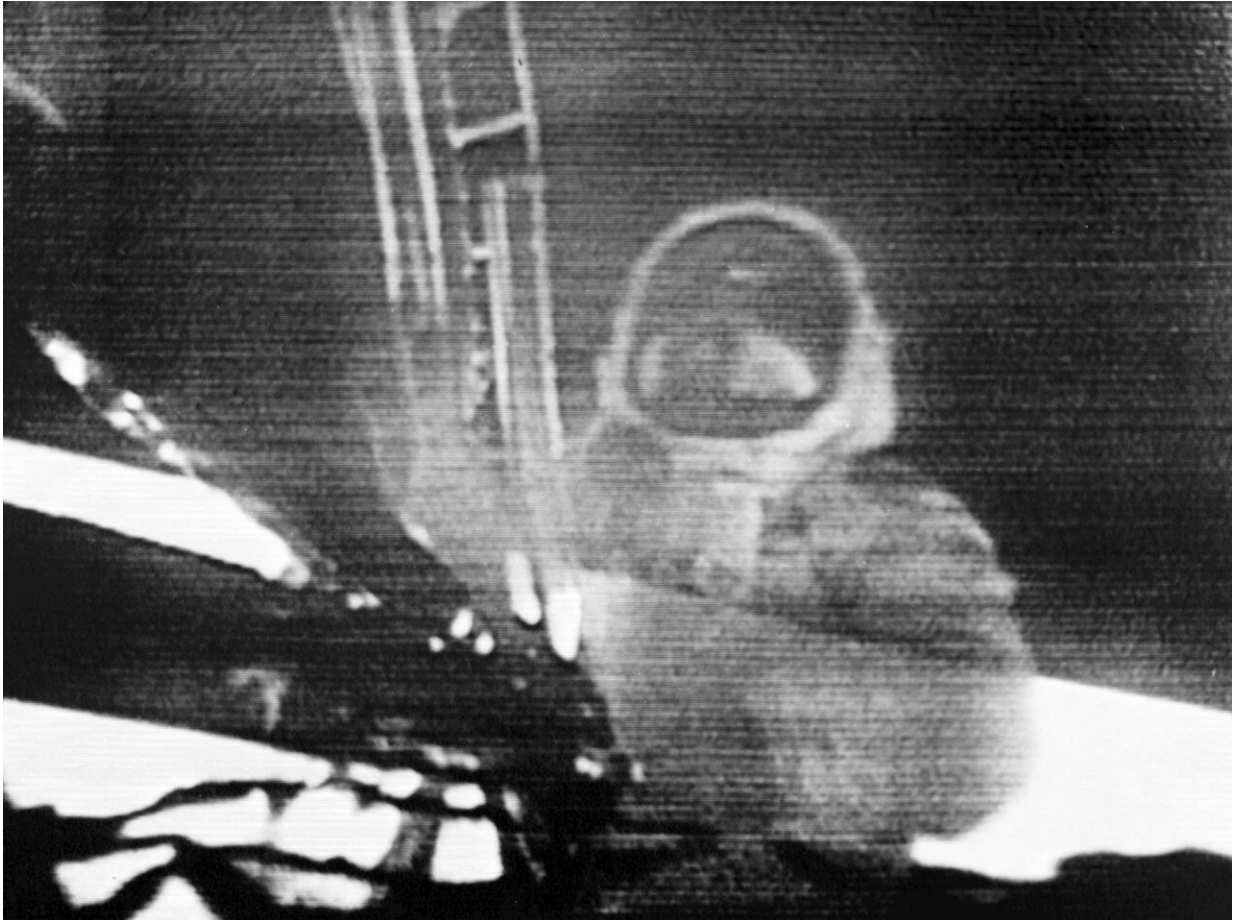
If nothing else, soak in the full moon Saturday night into Sunday morning.

Here's a rundown of some Apollo 11 tributes:

'The Eagle has landed'

NASA's Kennedy Space Center is holding a moon fest at its tourist stop, just a few miles from where the Saturn V rocket thundered away with Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins on July 16, 1969. Houston's Johnson Space Center, home to Mission Control, is also getting into the act. Four days after they left Earth, Armstrong and Aldrin, in their lunar module, Eagle, settled onto the Sea of Tranquility at 4:17 p.m. Eastern

with barely any fuel remaining. "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed," Armstrong radioed from 240,000 miles (386,000 kilometers) away. "No moment united the country quite like when the Eagle landed, as all of planet Earth watched from below," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said Friday in an anniversary message.



In this image from video provided by NASA, Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong steps onto the surface of the moon on July 20, 1969. Credit: NASA via AP, File

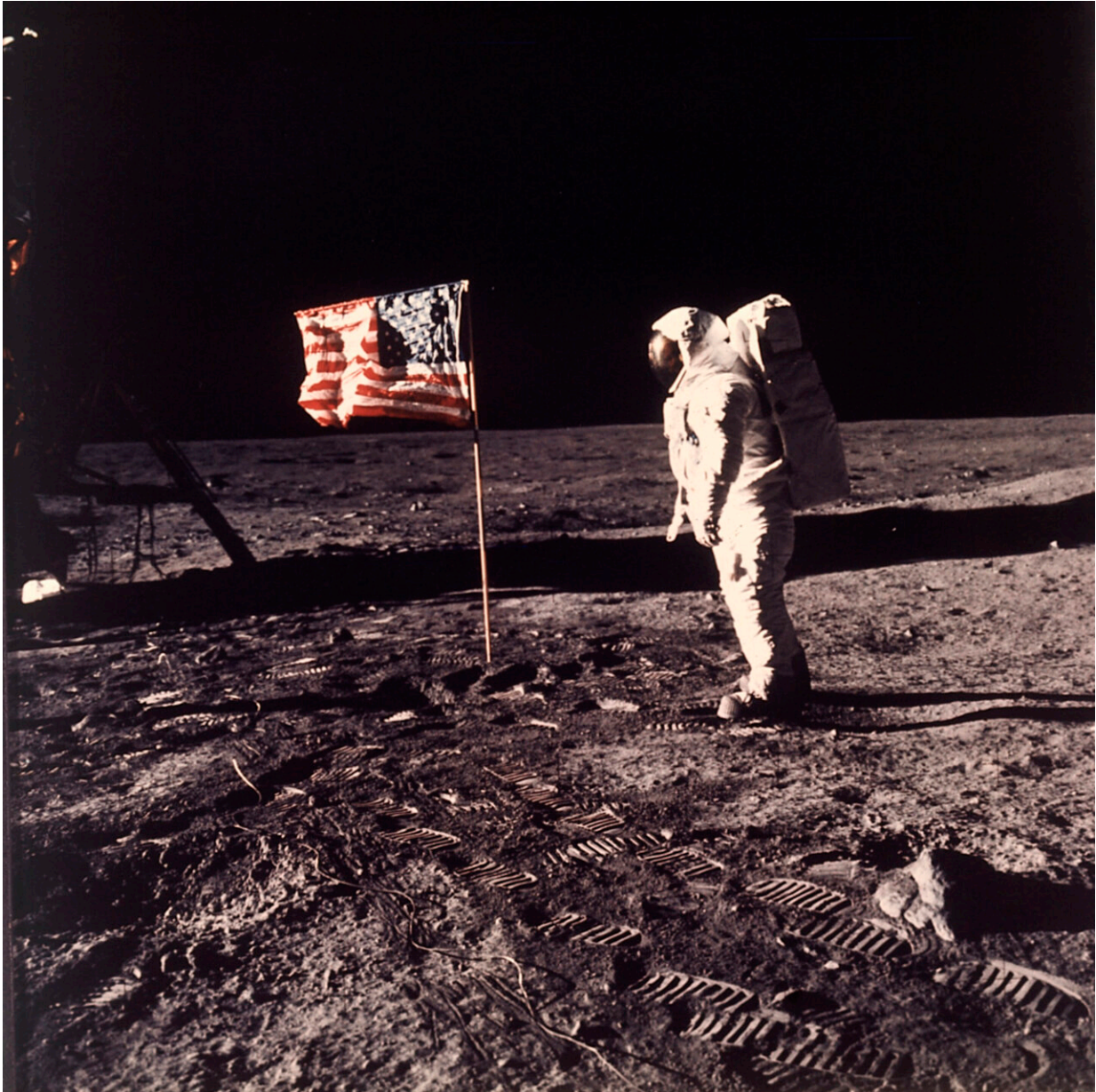
'One small step'

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," Armstrong proclaimed as he became the first person to step on the moon.

Armstrong grew up in northwestern Ohio's Wapakoneta, now home to the Armstrong Air and Space Museum. The museum's tribute Saturday begins with a pair of "Run to the Moon" races, followed by model rocket launches and wind tunnel demos. John Glenn, the first American to orbit Earth, hailed from New Concord on the opposite side of the state, some 150 miles (240 kilometers) away. The John and Annie Glenn Museum will be open there Saturday for your astronaut fix.

'Magnificent desolation'

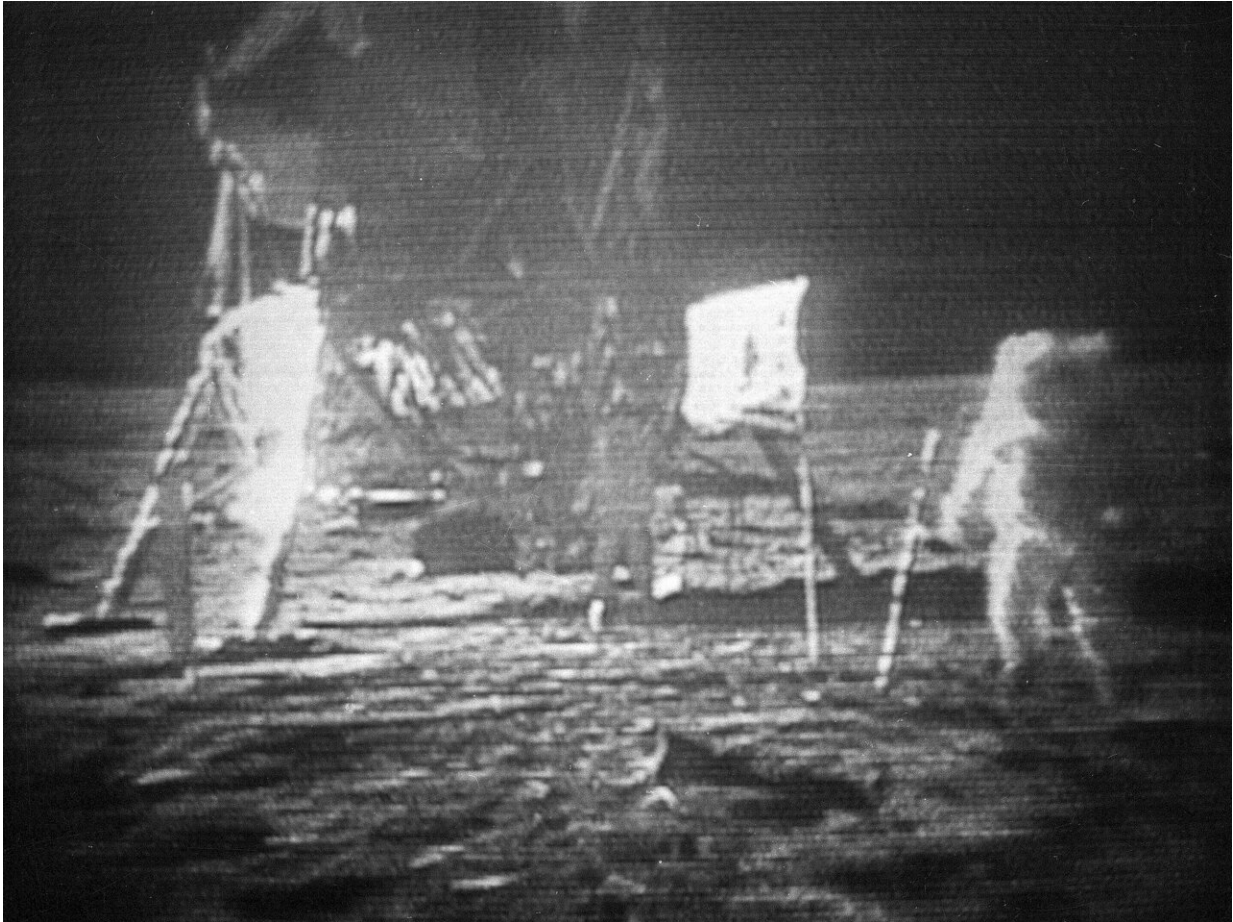
Aldrin followed Armstrong outside on the moon, uttering "Magnificent desolation." They spent just over two hours treading the dusty surface, before returning to their [lunar module](#) and blasting off to link back up with Collins, the command module pilot who had remained in [lunar orbit](#). Armstrong's spacesuit for the moonshot was restored in time for the 50th anniversary in 2019. It's on display at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, along with their return capsule. Aldrin and Collins' spacesuits from Apollo 11 are also part of the Smithsonian collection and currently in storage. Collins died in 2021, less than a year after the 50th anniversary; Armstrong died in 2012.



In this photo provided by NASA, astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin poses for a photograph beside the U.S. flag deployed on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission on July 20, 1969. Credit: Neil Armstrong/NASA via AP, File



The reflections of astronaut Neil Armstrong, the U.S. flag, the lunar module and a television camera are seen in the face mask of astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin when his picture was made by Armstrong as they walked across the surface of the moon, July 20, 1969. Credit: Neil Armstrong/NASA via AP, File



In this image from video provided by NASA, Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong, right, walks across the surface of the moon leaving behind footprints, July 20, 1969. The U.S. flag, planted on the surface by the astronauts, can be seen between Armstrong and the lunar module. Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin is seen closer to the craft. Credit: NASA via AP, File



U.S. Air Force Col. Buzz Aldrin, retired, listens to a speaker during a ceremony awarding him with an honorary appointment of Brigadier General at the Los Angeles Air Force Base Friday, May 5, 2023, in El Segundo, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File



A crowd watches giant television screens in New York's Central Park on July 20, 1969, as the Apollo 11 crew lands on the moon. Credit: AP Photo/Marty Lederhandler, File

Splashdown!

The capsule holding Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins—dubbed Columbia—splashed down in the Pacific on July 24, 1969. They were recovered by the USS Hornet, a Navy aircraft carrier that repeated the job for Apollo 12 four months later. The Hornet is now part of a museum in Alameda, California, with a splashdown party planned aboard the ship on Saturday. Some of the original recovery crew will be there. The Apollo 11 astronauts immediately went into quarantine

aboard the Hornet and, along with 48 pounds (22 kilograms) of moon rocks and soil, remained off-limits for weeks as they were moved to Houston. Scientists feared the astronauts might have brought back moon germs. Most of the rocks remain locked up inside a restricted lab at Houston's Johnson Space Center. The Apollo program landed 12 astronauts on the moon from 1969 through 1972.

Next up: Apollo's twin

NASA aims to send four astronauts around the moon next year—part of a new moon program named Artemis after Apollo's twin sister in Greek mythology. The SLS rocket for that flyaround—short for Space Launch System—is due at Kennedy Space Center next week. It's arriving by barge from NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans. This core stage will get a pair of strap-on boosters at Kennedy before blasting off in September 2025—at the earliest—with three U.S. astronauts and one Canadian. None of them will land on the moon; that will come on a following mission with another crew no earlier than 2026.

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