

Decades-old photos emerge of Apollo training (Images)

May 31 2014, by Audrey Mcavoy



Some training was on Mauna Kea volcano, where glacial runoff crushed and refined rock into powder. Astronauts also trained on recent lava flows.

Today, robots are tested on the Big Island for moon and Mars missions.

In recent years, engineers have tested technology to pull oxygen out of the island's dirt, which is volcanic basalt like the Martian and lunar soil. Future missions could use this technology to extract oxygen from the land instead of taking it along. The oxygen could be used for breathing, to make fuel or for other purposes.

This 1971 image provided by NASA shows Apollo 17 astronauts, Harrison "Jack" Schmitt, left, and an unidentified man, training with the lunar roving vehicle on the Big Island of Hawaii. Before many Apollo astronauts went to the moon, they came to Hawaii to train on the Big Island's lunar landscapes. Now, decades-old photos are surfacing of astronauts scooping up Hawaii's soil and riding across volcanic fields in a "moon buggy" vehicle. (AP Photo/NASA)

Before Apollo astronauts went to the moon, they went to Hawaii to train on the Big Island's lunar-like landscapes.

Now, decades-old photos are surfacing of astronauts scooping up Hawaii's soil and riding across volcanic fields in a "moon buggy" vehicle.

The Pacific International Space Center for Exploration Systems, a Hawaii state agency, is displaying the photos at its Hilo headquarters. Rob Kelso, the agency's executive director, found the images at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Astronauts from Apollo missions 13 through 17 trained in Hawaii as did some back up crews, Kelso said.



This 1970 image provided by NASA shows Apollo 14 astronauts Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell and Stuart Roost and an unidentified man training with a Modularized Equipment Transporter on the Big Island of Hawaii. Before many Apollo astronauts went to the moon, they came to Hawaii to train on the Big Island's lunar landscapes. Now, decades-old photos are surfacing of astronauts scooping up Hawaii's soil and riding across volcanic fields in a "moon buggy" vehicle. (AP Photo/NASA)

Kelso said scientists are also interested in testing

robots at the Big Island's lava tubes and lava tube skylight holes, which resemble similar formations recently spotted in high-definition images taken by satellites orbiting the moon, Mercury, Venus and Mars.

Lava tubes are tunnels made when lava forms a solid roof after flowing steadily in a confined area for hours. Skylight holes are formed when part of the tube breaks.



This Dec. 1970 image provided by NASA shows Apollo 15 astronauts training on the Big Island of Hawaii. Before many Apollo astronauts went to the moon, they came to Hawaii to train on the Big Island's lunar landscapes. Now, decades-old photos are surfacing of astronauts scooping up Hawaii's soil and riding across volcanic fields in a "moon buggy" vehicle. (AP Photo/NASA)



This Dec. 1970 image provided by NASA shows Apollo 15 commander, Dave Scott and lunar module pilot Jim Irwin training on the Big Island, Hawaii. Before many Apollo astronauts went to the moon, they came to Hawaii to train on the Big Island's lunar landscapes. Now, decades-old photos are surfacing of astronauts scooping up Hawaii's soil and riding across volcanic fields in a "moon buggy" vehicle. (AP Photo/NASA)

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