

US company gets historic nod to send lander to moon

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Until now, only the governments of the United States, the Soviet Union

and China have sent spacecraft to the moon.

Commercial spacecraft have flown within the bounds of Earth's orbit.

"We are now free to set sail as explorers to Earth's eighth continent, the moon, seeking new knowledge and resources to expand Earth's economic sphere for the benefit of all humanity," said Bob Richards, co-founder and chief executive of Moon Express.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced its approval Wednesday, following consultations with the White House, State Department and the US space agency NASA.

Moon Express, based in Cape Canaveral, Florida, was founded in 2010.

It has yet to finish its [moon lander](#), which will be carried in late 2017 by a rocket made by Rocket Lab, another startup, which has not yet launched any commercial missions.

"The sky is not the limit for Moon Express—it is the launchpad," said Moon Express co-founder Naveen Jain, describing the [government approval](#) as "another giant leap for humanity."

The company's goal is to develop low-cost spacecraft and to explore the resources on the moon, he said.

"In the immediate future we envision bringing precious resources, metals and moon rocks back to Earth," said Jain.

More information: Moon Express: www.moonexpress.com/

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