Artemis II voyage Splashdown landing

The Artemis II mission marks the first crewed lunar flyby in over fifty years. The 10-day mission that began with a blast-off now concludes with a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean, where the crew is safely brought back to Earth. Their successful return marks a major milestone as the expedition paves the way for future exploration and possible human settlement among the stars.

The expedition began on April 1, 2026, from Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, Florida, roughly 50 miles east of Orlando. Jets roared as the crew buckled in, and people across the globe watched this historic event, broadcast directly from NASA's facilities. The last time such an event took place was during the Apollo 17 mission in 1972. The goal was to reach and circle around the far side of the Moon and return, showcasing just how far scientific research has advanced. The mission itself was largely viewed as a test run to travel the furthest possible distance and collect critical data for upcoming missions.

The Orion capsule had completed its course by Friday, April 10, 2026, awaiting NASA's control rooms and millions of viewers watching on television. Further demonstrating the technological capabilities of the Orion, the plunge into the ocean was set to autopilot and ready to descend. The capsule became red-hot during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, entering a communications blackout. The crew Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Canada's Jeremy Hansen, landed and surfaced from the Orion capsule off the coast of San Diego, California. Military aircraft lifted each astronaut individually from their inflatable raft, still attached to the Orion capsule, before transporting them to the U.S. Navy's recovery ship, the USS John P. Murtha.

The Artemis II mission represents a peak into the not so distant future of space travel beyond Earth. NASA Director Jared Isaacman highlighted the broader plans for further exploration, emphasizing that this is, in fact, only the beginning of what's to come.

"We are back in the business of sending astronauts to the Moon, bringing them back safely, and setting up for a series more," Isaacman said. "This is just the beginning."

Photo of Landing via NASA website:

