

# First Men Around The Moon

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In December 1968 men first broke the restraining bonds of Earth on their way to the Moon. Astronauts James Lovell, Jr., Frank Borman, and William Anders were couched in their Apollo-8 spacecraft when it blasted off from Cape Kennedy atop a huge Saturn-V rocket on December 21, 1968. Unlike today's Space Shuttle, the six-million pound Saturn-V rocket which stood 364 feet tall on its launch pad was not reusable. Only the small cone-like command capsule would return to Earth intact for a night-time mid-Pacific Ocean recovery on December 27th.

This was the first time in history that men had left the gravitational confines of Earth, achieving escape velocity. When the third stage of the Saturn-V rocket was done firing—translunar injection—the Earth no longer lay sole claim to their ship. The Moon beckoned as the astronauts headed for their Christmas eve entry into lunar orbit.

The Apollo-8 mission claimed other firsts: the first time men gazed directly down on their own planet and viewed its full disc; the first time men looked directly at the forever turned farside of the Moon; the first spectacular

seen by men. Aviation pioneer, Charles Lindbergh, was one of the many attendees at the historic Apollo-8 launching. It was only 41 years in the lifetime of one man from the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean to crossing the ocean of space. In its pioneering spirit Apollo-8 may have been as exciting as the first lunar landing by Apollo-11 the following July.

The crew of Apollo-8 eased themselves into lunar orbit by reverse direction firing their rocket engines to brake their speed on the farside of the moon. Circling the moon ten times at an altitude of about 70 miles, the Earthlings beheld the alien grey landscape and viewed Earth from 230,000 miles. An emotional highlight of Apollo-8 was the Christmas eve reading of Genesis broadcast from lunar orbit by the astro-

nauts, in part: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the Earth. And God said 'Let there be light.' And there was light. And from the crew of Apollo-8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth."

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