Apollo 11 timeline: Key dates and timings of NASA's historic moon landing

NASA's Apollo 11 mission saw humans step foot on the moon for the first time, having completed the gruelling 225,623-mile journey all the way from Earth!

While the first step onto our lunar satellite officially took place on July 20, 1969, a whole series of events led up to that amazing moment.

To help create a clearer picture, we've put together a timeline of key dates and timings in the Apollo 11 mission.

**July 16, 1969**

Apollo 11 launched from Cape Kennedy on July 16, 1969, with three astronauts on board - Commander **Neil Armstrong**, Command Module Pilot **Michael Collins** and Lunar Module Pilot **Edwin ‘Buzz’ Aldrin**.

Initially, the spacecraft was placed into an Earth-orbit, but around three hours later the S-IVB stage reignited for a second burn, placing Apollo 11 into a translunar orbit.

The first colour TV transmission from Apollo 11 occurred on this day, once the spacecraft had entered into its ‘translunar coast’ phase.

**July 17, 1969**

While NASA had scheduled four midcourse corrections for the flight path to make sure the spacecraft remained on track, only one was needed, thanks to the successful launch!

**July 18, 1969**

On July 18, Armstrong and Aldrin put on their spacesuits, and climbed through the docking tunnel to check out the lunar module, Eagle. There, they made the second TV transmission.

**July 19, 1969**

The first lunar orbit insertion manoeuvre took place on July 19, after Apollo 11 had flown behind the moon. This helped to orientate the spacecraft into the best position to land.
**July 20, 1969**

On July 20, the Eagle undocked from the main spacecraft, before descending down and landing on the moon’s Sea of Tranquility site. They landed about four miles downrange from the original predicted touchdown point. Around four hours after this landing, Neil Armstrong emerged from the Eagle and deployed a TV camera for the transmission of the event to Earth.

Finally, around 109 hours, 42 minutes after launch, Armstrong stepped onto the moon, uttering the famous phrase ‘one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” Buzz Aldrin then followed behind him, around 20 minutes later.

During their time on the moon, the astronauts left several items on the lunar surface. This included commemorative medallions bearing the names of the three Apollo 1 astronauts who lost their lives in a tragic launch pad fire, and two cosmonauts who also died in accidents, as well as a 1.5-inch silicon disk, containing goodwill messages from 73 countries, and the names of congressional and NASA leaders.

They also collected several lunar surface samples, and deployed the Early Apollo Scientific Experiments Package, or EASEP, experiments.

Overall, the astronauts spent 21 hours, 36 minutes on the moon’s surface, before launching back to the main spacecraft.

**July 21, 1969**

From July 21-24, the spacecraft made the journey back to Earth, making two more television transmissions in the process.

**July 24, 1969**

Finally, on July 24, 1969, Apollo 11 returned to Earth, splashing down into the Pacific Ocean, 13 miles from the recovery ship, USS Hornet.