

NASA's Artemis II crewed lunar flyby is a tale for the ages

SHOUMIK ZUBYER

On April 1, 2026, no joke – humanity left Earth's orbit once again for the first time since 1972 to profess ephemeral devotion to our dearest Moon. Four astronauts aboard NASA's Orion spacecraft, "Integrity", flew around the Moon and broke more than a few records before splashing down in the Pacific on Friday, April 10.

With their 10-day expedition and new chic spacesuits, having travelled boldly where no one has gone before, Artemis II astronauts swung their moonship back with a lunar flyby that has revealed views never beheld by eyes until now, from the Deep Space Network.

Artemis II is the first crewed flight beyond low Earth orbit since Apollo 17. Its objectives echo those of Apollo 8 in 1968: go around the Moon, don't land, prove the hardware works, and come home alive. Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover, and Mission Specialists Christina



Earthset captured through the Orion spacecraft window at 6:41 PM EDT, April 6, 2026, during the Artemis II crew's flyby of the Moon. PHOTOS: NASA

what some call "moon joy" – the cognitive shift astronauts report when Earth appears small and alone in the window of space.

Artemis II carried four formal objectives. First, lunar surface photography. The crew used high resolution cameras and, for the first time ever, hand-held devices, to document impact craters, lava plains, and geological formations on both the near and far sides. This imagery will inform landing site selection for Artemis IV's South Pole touchdown in 2028.

At almost 6,500 kilometres from the lunar surface, the crew photographed craters, ridges, and lunar mares with Nikons and iPhones, like tourists with the best zoom in history.

Second, solar corona observation. During the lunar eclipse, with the Sun blocked behind the Moon, the crew studied the Sun's outer atmosphere, data typically only accessible during brief Earth-based total eclipses.

Third, meteoroid impact flash monitoring. Watching for brief light bursts from tiny rocks striking the lunar surface, using computational models to assess surface suitability for future astronauts.

Upon arrival, the astronauts requested permission to name two bright, freshly carved craters. The first was "Integrity", after their capsule, and the other, "Carroll" – Commander Wiseman's wife, who passed tragically of cancer in 2020. Wiseman wept as Hansen put in the request to Mission Control, and all four astronauts joined in an embrace. Tears were the memo all the way to Houston.

Wiseman and crew spent years studying lunar

geography to prepare for the big event. Topping their science target list: Orientale Basin, a sprawling depression with three concentric rings, the outermost of which stretches nearly 950 kilometres across. "Such a majestic view out here," Wiseman radioed once he regained his composure and started picture-taking.

Fourth and finally, deep space physiological assessment: crew members wore personal dosimeters throughout, establishing human radiation exposure baselines beyond Earth's protective magnetosphere. This is crucial for planning longer Artemis missions and an eventual Mars transit. Cardiovascular and cognitive performance were monitored continuously, building a medical dataset fed directly into mission planning for Artemis III, IV, and the proposed lunar base camp – the holy grail of NASA's ambitions.

As Orion approached the Moon, lunar gravity accelerated the spacecraft – pulling it inward and around the far side. Think of it like a ball on a string: swing it around a post, and it whips back in the opposite direction, faster than it started. NASA calculated the entry angle precisely so that instead of being captured into lunar orbit, Orion used that gravitational pull to bend its trajectory back toward Earth, emerging faster than it arrived. No major engine burn required.

Below them, the landing sites of Apollo 12 and 14 caught sight, poignant reminders of NASA's first age of exploration, more than half a century

gone. To bring all of this together, NASA drew on its signature institutional architecture of layered collaboration. Aerospace and defence giant Lockheed Martin built the Orion capsule; Boeing and Northrop Grumman engineered the Space Launch System (SLS) – atop which the crew capsule sits. The European Space Agency contributed Orion's critical service module, which enables the manoeuvring of the capsule. Aerojet Rocketdyne supplied the main engines.

Overseeing it all was NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman, sworn in December 2025.

Mission operations are anchored at Johnson Space Center, Houston, and launch operations are at Kennedy Space Center, Florida. The bill? Staggering. SLS development alone exceeded USD 20 billion altogether, with each launch estimated at roughly USD two billion.

Artemis II sets the stage for next year's Artemis III, which will see another Orion crew practice docking with lunar landers in orbit around Earth. The culminating moon landing by two astronauts near the moon's south pole will follow on Artemis IV in 2028.

On April 8, 2025, Bangladesh became the 54th nation to sign the Artemis Accords, committing to the safe and sustainable exploration of space. Bangladesh's Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Md Ashraf Uddin, signed on behalf of the government, in the presence of US Charge d'Affaires Tracey Jacobson, at the 2025 Investor Summit in Dhaka.

Artemis II was merely a declaration of intent in a new, bruising contest for lunar dominance. We are officially one of 61 nations and one of 15 from Asia to be a signatory to the accords that may spawn the ascension of humankind to an interplanetary species. NASA continues to target early 2028 for the first Artemis IV lunar landing – a date that has remained unchanged since mid-2025. The Moon is waiting. It always has been.

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The Artemis II crew – (clockwise from left) Mission Specialist Christina Koch, Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen, Commander Reid Wiseman, and Pilot Victor Glover – pause for a group photo.

Koch of NASA and Jeremy Hansen of the Canadian Space Agency lifted off at 6:35 PM EDT, bound for a 1.1-million-kilometre round journey.

This was a mission to inspire the entire human race and instil hope in the most trying of times. Victor Glover became the first African-American, Christina Koch the first woman, Jeremy Hansen the first non-US citizen, and Reid Wiseman the oldest person ever to travel beyond low Earth orbit.

"This is an opportunity for us to remember where we are, who we are, and that we are the same thing – and that we've got to get through this together," said Glover to CBS News, clasping hands with his crewmates, overwhelmed by

YOU CAN'T WRITE YOUR WAY OUT OF GRIEF

On expressive writing therapy and its pitfalls

NUZHAT TAHIYA

Back in college, while attending a swimming class with my mum, I almost drowned in the deep end of the pool. I remember, as I clawed at the water and felt chlorine sting my eyes, a distant part of me thought, desperately, "Note this feeling so you can write it down later." Even as my lungs compressed and the blue light above the surface rippled and retreated, some cool, administrative fragment of my brain had opened a ledger. That split self – one drowning, one filing the incident report – has never entirely left me.

The compulsion to catalogue is older than therapy, older than literature, and arguably older than language itself. Prehistoric humans pressed handprints into cave walls. Mediaeval monks copied their own suffering into the margins of illuminated texts. Samuel Pepys wrote by candlelight about his fears, his jealousies, and his plague-haunted city, encoding it all in a private cypher.

We are a species that seems to believe, with tremendous stubbornness, that if we can get a feeling outside of ourselves – shaped into sentences – we will somehow be free of it.

The diary, in particular, has been elevated into a kind of sacrament. Therapists assign them. Self-help culture treats the blank journal as a portal: write your way through. And writing can be genuinely transformative – research on expressive writing, notably the work of psychologist James Pennebaker, has shown that putting difficult experiences into words can reduce stress markers and improve immune function. The science is real but partial.

However, there is a form of diary-keeping that is not processing at all, but rumination masquerading as productivity: you sit down, you describe the wound in loving detail, you give it a name, and then you do it again the next day. The entry becomes a ritual of return rather than departure. Psychologists call this co-rumination when it happens between two people, but it happens just as readily between a person and their own notebook. The act of writing begins to feel like progress because it requires effort and produces an artefact. But the feeling being documented has

not shifted; it has simply been given a permanent address.

What the compulsion to catalogue often obscures is a more uncomfortable truth: that some emotions are not puzzles to be solved through sufficient description but weather to be endured. Trauma, in particular, can be hard to contain in language. For some, a diary kept in acute grief functions less as a record of healing and more as a mausoleum.

I have spent evenings crying less from sadness than from a kind of writer's anxiety – the fear that I wasn't going to find the right words for what I was feeling and that the feeling would escape before I could get it down. But some things need to be felt in the body before they're fit for the page.

What actually moves emotion through the body is messy and less publishable. It's crying without knowing exactly why. It's sitting in a feeling long enough that it becomes boring. These processes resist documentation because they

happen below – or above – the level of language. Rilke, in his Letters to a Young Poet, wrote about living the questions rather than forcing answers. The swimmers who don't drown are usually the ones who stop fighting the water and let it hold them – who stop trying to climb out of the experience and instead go still within it. I know this now. I knew it then, technically. But there I was, clawing and making mental notes.

I did eventually make it out of the pool. A lifeguard pulled me to the edge, and as I sat on the tile, coughing, while my mother floated idly somewhere on the other side of the water, I remember thinking, "The tile is cold and rough like pumice." I remember thinking, "This is the kind of detail that makes a scene real." I didn't write it down. And I remember it more clearly than almost anything I ever have.

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Reference: Idyll Arbor. (2014). *Expressive Writing: Words That Heal*.



PHOTO: SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

The blue-hair narrative and the art of meaning

ALEENA YUSRA

TV Girl's "Blue Hair", a famous track from the album *Death of a Party Girl*, is a simple and ambiguous song. Carried by a dreamy, melancholic melody, the song turns to blue hair as a cryptic literary tool to grapple with identity and an intimate connection that is fading. The girl in the song doesn't just dye her hair; she builds a version of herself around it. But that version is fragile and ephemeral.

"What seemed so blue in the sunlight by night was a pale green."

This line from the song quietly speaks to something larger: the volatile nature of blue hair as a metaphor, as well as the ethos of blue-haired characters across media who are similarly in flux.

It acknowledges that blue is an unusual hair colour that has mastered the art of meaning. Ever evolving with rich symbolism that speaks many different stories, yet never fixed in essence. Blue thrives in multivalence, shifting through sorrow, grief, chaos, rebellion, and disconnection.

This spectacle finds a clear expression in *Coraline Jones* and her iconic blue hair. Coraline's blue exists in a world of sombre tones, signifying the stark contrast between her innate vibrancy and a world drained of colour that shapes the film's atmosphere. Her striking colour against the dullness renders her unfitting, but the blue marks her emotional vulnerability stemming from isolation. Her vulnerabilities connect her to the "Other World". The other world breathes colour; the rooms feel alive, and her blue hair in the middle of it makes sense. The environment of saturated blues, deep purples, and glowing skies has the belonging Coraline lacks in reality.

In *Life Is Strange*, Chloe Price's blue hair is born from something louder. Her electric blue hair is not incidental but dyed and deliberately maintained. Her haircut against the mundane Arcadia Bay is worn as a mark of rebellion. Chloe's blue hair is defensive but heavy with the weight of her past. Chloe exists in a constant state of instability, and her unnatural blue hair becomes a visible, rebelling assertion of control within this frailty. Yet more importantly, it

externalises her grief following the death of her father, the disappearance of her best friend, and abandonment by those closest to her.

The blue hair of Diane Nguyen from *BoJack Horseman* is complex and quietly insidious. Diane understands the world too well: its injustices, hypocrisies, and emptiness. She feels powerless to meaningfully change it, leading to depression and disillusionment and made worse by her belief that her trauma must amount to something "useful" to justify its existence. Diane's blue hair is a visual maestro of subtle, internal chaos, much like the questions she cannot answer about herself, her past or her purpose.



ILLUSTRATION: ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Rei Ayanami from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and 2-D from *Gorillaz* wear blue hair that echoes in the vacant spot left behind after the erosion of self. Rei exists on the periphery of emotion with an eerie indifference because she was never allowed to form a stable identity. Her pale blue hair is drained of warmth. It reflects a tragic life in a liminal state, caught between human emotions and artificial purpose. 2-D's blue hair signals a detachment shaped by repeated physical and psychological damage, which has left him disoriented. The blue is passive, almost accidental, as 2-D hazily drifts through the world with no control.

Lastly, a quintessential for blue-haired depictions: Jinx from *Arcane*. Jinx's hair is all anarchic power. The unique, styled braids, the electric blue, are an overwhelming force of nature that serves as an integral part of her characterisation. Within Zaun, her blue hair becomes a language of collective resistance against Piltover's oppression. Her hair, like powder, was an innocent blue and shorter with the messiness of a carefree child. As Jinx, it became a wild, ominous blue, deliberately long and architectural to show the weight of a fractured psyche spiralling. In the alternative timeline where she was spared trauma, it remains light, short, and unburdened.

Blue resists a singular interpretation.

Narrowing down the layers of blue diminishes this exact 'other-ness' that makes it brilliant. Blue hair is never just one thing but an intricate window into the nuclear core of the wearers' stories and identities. It's a visual storyline that reveals what the characters cannot articulate. Like the girl in the song, what seems so vividly blue is never fixed but slips between fluid meanings and connects us to these characters.

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