

The most powerful rocket in the world, NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) successfully lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center at 1:47am EST this Wednesday. It proceeded to carry the uncrewed Orion spacecraft into orbit, as part of the Artemis I mission.

The launch took place after more than a decade of development. It was originally scheduled to take place this August, but was repeatedly postponed due to factors such as bad weather, hydrogen leaks and engine trouble. This latest attempt was a success, however, as the SLS blasted off and delivered Orion into orbit.

"After reaching its initial orbit, Orion deployed its solar arrays and engineers began performing checkouts of the spacecraft’s systems," NASA stated in a press release. "About 1.5 hours into flight, the rocket’s upper stage engine successfully fired for approximately 18 minutes to give Orion the big push needed to send it out of Earth orbit and toward the Moon."

Powered by its ESA-designed service module, Orion will proceed to travel about 40,000 miles (64,374 km) beyond the Moon then return to Earth, over a period of 25.5 days. The mission is intended to demonstrate the spacecraft's systems in a spaceflight environment, and to ensure a

safe re-entry, descent, splashdown, and recovery prior to the first *crewed* flight on the Artemis II mission.

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