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APOLLO 10: MAN'S NEAREST LUNAR APPROACH

Two Apollo 10 astronauts will descend to within eight nautical miles of the Moon's surface, the closest man has ever been to another celestial body.

A dress rehearsal for the first manned lunar landing, Apollo 10 is scheduled for launch May 18 at 12:49 p.m. EDT from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Kennedy Space Center, Fla.

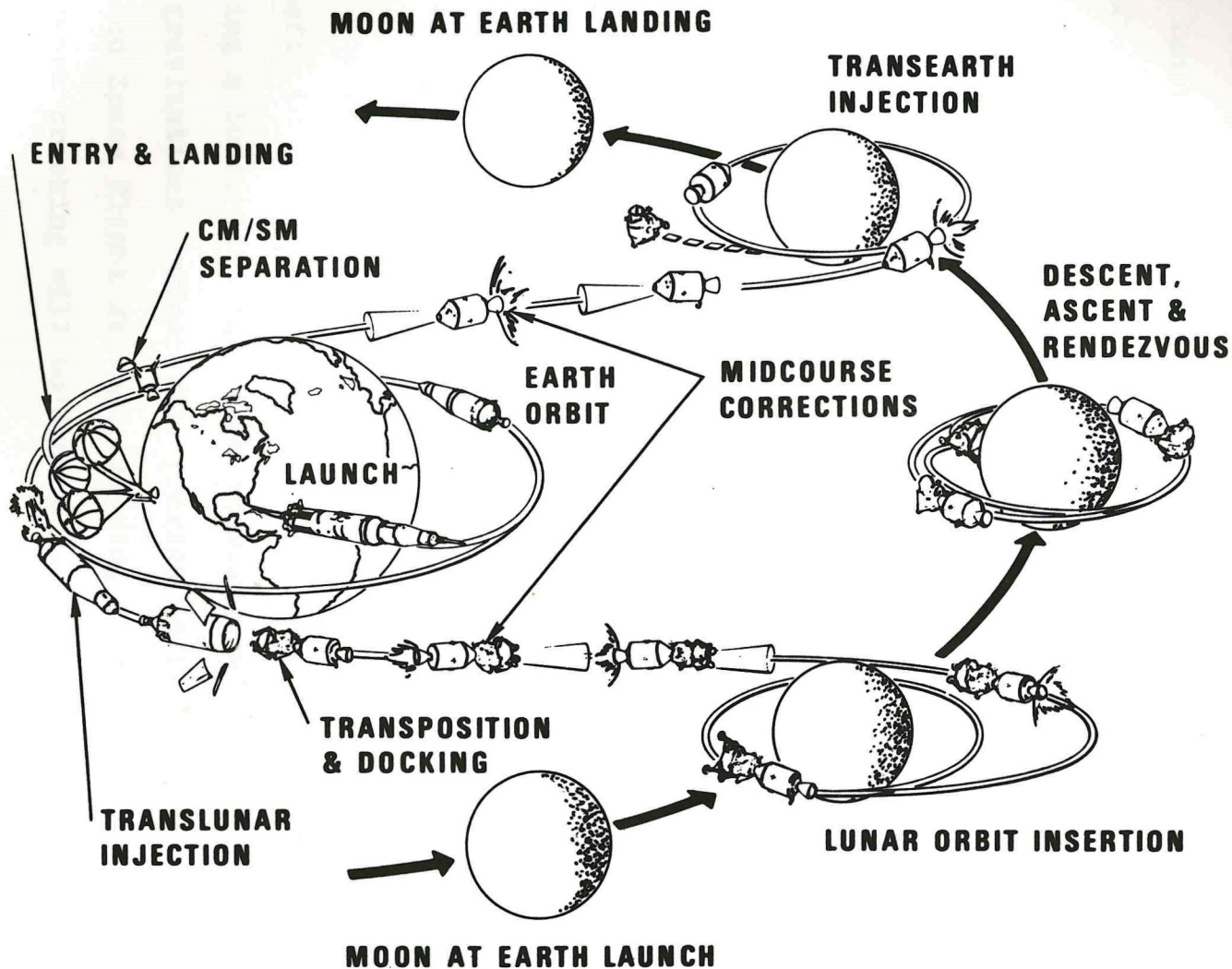
The eight-day, lunar orbit mission will mark the first time the complete Apollo spacecraft has operated around the Moon and the second manned flight for the lunar module.

Following closely the time line and trajectory to be flown on Apollo 11, Apollo 10 will include an eight-hour sequence of lunar module (LM) undocked activities during which the commander and LM pilot will descend to within eight nautical miles of the lunar surface and later rejoin the command/service module (CSM) in a 60-nautical-mile circular orbit.

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APOLLO LUNAR MISSION

All aspects of Apollo 10 will duplicate conditions of the lunar landing mission as closely as possible--Sun angles at Apollo Site 2, the out-and-back flight path to the Moon, and the time line of mission events. Apollo 10 differs from Apollo 11 in that no landing will be made on the Moon's surface.

Apollo 10 is designed to provide additional operational experience for the crew; space vehicle; and mission-support facilities during a simulated lunar landing mission. Among desired data points to be gained by Apollo 10 are LM systems operations at lunar distances as well as overall mission operational experience. The LM was successfully checked-out in Earth orbit in Apollo 9, including a rendezvous sequence simulating lunar orbit rendezvous.

Space navigation experience around the Moon is another benefit to be gained from flying a rehearsal mission before making a lunar landing. More knowledge of the lunar potential, or gravitational effect will provide additional refinement of Manned Space Flight Network tracking techniques, and broad landmark tracking will bolster this knowledge.