Apollo 10 launches, May 18, 1969

Jessica MacNeil - May 18, 2019

Apollo 10 was a crewed lunar landing mission, minus the landing.

Launched from Cape Kennedy on May 18, 1969, Apollo 10 was the fourth manned Apollo launch in seven months, and it became the second spacecraft to orbit the moon. Its crew was Commander Thomas Stafford, Lunar Module Pilot Eugene Cernan, and Command Module Pilot John Young (see NASA image below).

![Apollo 10's experienced crew included (L-R) Eugene Cernan, Thomas Stafford, and John Young.](image)

After it was set on a trajectory to reach the moon, Apollo 10's command/service module separated, then docked itself to the lunar module before both separated for a trip to the surface. When the crew arrived at the moon, Young remained in the command module, code-named Charlie Brown, while Stafford and Cernan flew the lunar module, code-named Snoopy.

On May 22, Stafford and Cernan simulated the Apollo 11 landing by descending in the lunar module and flying over landing site 2 in the Sea of Tranquility. During the eight-hour lunar orbit, the separated lunar module descended to about nine miles from the lunar surface. The objectives were
to get data on lunar potential, and test the lunar module's programmed trajectories, radar, and flight control systems.

The Charlie Brown command module is seen here in lunar orbit.

The mission was a success, but it didn't go off without a hitch. When the ascent engine was ignited to send the lunar module away from the lunar surface, duplicated commands to the flight computer caused the spacecraft to roll violently, but control was restored after 8 rolls.

After completing the landing simulation, the Apollo 10 mission focused on landmark tracking and photography. There were also 19 color television transmissions, totaling 5 hours 52 minutes, during the mission.

The crew re-entered Earth's atmosphere and splashed down in Pacific Ocean on May 26. The total flight time was 192 hours, 3 minutes, and 23 seconds.

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**Editor's note:** This article was originally posted on May 18, 2015 and edited on May 18, 2019.