

Following Historic Artemis II Mission, Humans to the Moon and Mars Summit Heads to Houston

July 21–23 event at Rice University unites NASA leaders, astronauts, scientists, innovators, and space executives on the next era of lunar and Mars exploration

HOUSTON, TX, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Three months after Artemis II

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carried astronauts around the Moon for the first time in more than half a century, leaders from across the space community will gather in Houston to plan for what comes next. [Explore Mars, Inc.](#) will host the [2026 Humans to the Moon and Mars Summit](#), known as H2M2, July 21–23 at Rice University’s BioScience Research Collaborative. The Summit will take place in Houston for the first time, bringing the national conversation about lunar and Mars exploration to the home of NASA’s Johnson Space Center and one of the world’s most important centers for human spaceflight.

The three-day program reflects a significant transition in space exploration. Artemis II demonstrated that humans can once again travel beyond low-Earth orbit. H2M2 2026 will focus on the capabilities, partnerships, and decisions required to build a sustained presence at the Moon, prepare for human missions to Mars, and translate technologies developed for extreme environments into benefits for people on Earth.

“This is an extraordinary moment for human exploration,” said Dr. Tiffany Vora, the new President and Board Member of Explore Mars. “Artemis II gave a new generation the experience of watching humans travel to the Moon. Now we have to turn that renewed sense of possibility into a clear and responsible path forward. This Summit brings together the people working on the systems, science, health, food, culture, and partnerships that will allow humans to flourish beyond Earth while creating practical advances that strengthen life here at home.”

The 2026 program will examine the lessons and opportunities emerging from Artemis II, the development of a lunar base, the role of the Moon in enabling Mars missions, the growth of

commercial space infrastructure, nuclear propulsion and power, lunar and Mars logistics, public-private partnerships, and the future of NASA science.

The Summit will also devote substantial attention to the human requirements of deep-space exploration. Sessions will address astronaut physical and mental health, autonomous medical care, human-spaceflight analogs, food and nutrition, biological adaptation, humanities, and culture. A special Mars Innovation Workshop will use the challenge of feeding a thriving community on Mars to explore advances in food production, biomanufacturing, personalized nutrition, circular resource use, and resilient supply chains with applications on Earth.

THE 2026
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“Reaching the Moon again was a historic achievement, and the challenge now is sustained execution,” said Chris Carberry, CEO and co-founder of Explore Mars. “Government, industry, universities, researchers, and international partners must align around an achievable architecture for the Moon and Mars. Houston is the right place for this conversation because it combines the legacy of human spaceflight with the commercial, scientific, and technical capabilities needed to build its future.”

The conference will feature leaders in human spaceflight, and science and industry, including:

- Vanessa Wyche, Director of NASA's Johnson Space Center
- Dr. Greg Bonnen, member of the Texas House of Representatives and Chair of the House Appropriations Committee[cc1.1]
- Kristin Houston, President of Space Propulsion and Power Systems at L3Harris
- Dr. James Green, former NASA Chief Scientist and former Director of Planetary Science
- Michael Gold, President of Redwire Space
- Dr. Leroy Chiao, former NASA astronaut and CEO of OneOrbit
- Dr. Bonnie Dunbar, NASA Astronaut, retired; Director | Institute for Engineering Education and Innovation
- Dr. Scott Parazynski, physician and former NASA astronaut
- Eddie Seyffert, Blue Origin | Director of Civil Space

- Dr. Shawna Pandya, physician and suborbital astronaut with the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences
- Chris Coker, Intuitive Machines, Vice President, Civil Space Programs
- Aymette Medina, Blue Origin astronaut, NS-32
- Dr. Bruce Jakosky, founding principal investigator of NASA's MAVEN Mars mission
- Ed Van Cise, acting Director of NASA's Moon Base Mission and Systems Interoperability Office
- Audrey Morris-Eckart, Systems Architect in NASA's Office of the Chief Architect
- Richard French, Vice President of Business Development and Strategy for Space Systems at Rocket Lab
- Humphrey "Hoppy" Price, Chief Engineer for NASA's robotic Mars Exploration Program at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory
- Michelle Frieling, Director of Human Health and Performance at NASA Johnson Space Center
- Dr. Grace Douglas, Lead Scientist for Advanced Food Technology at NASA Johnson Space Center
- Zack Rosenthal, Manager of Space Food Systems at Vast Space
- Dr. Scott Solomon, Rice University evolutionary biologist and author of Becoming Martian
- Dr. David Alexander, Director of the Rice Space Institute
- Dr. Robert Ambrose, Associate Director of the Texas A&M Space Institute
- Dr. Greg Autry, Senior Advisor for Space at the U.S. Department of State
- Megan E. Ortiz, Senior Director of External Relations at Axiom Space

The program will also feature leaders from L3Harris, Blue Origin, Intuitive Machines, Rocket Lab, MDA, Interlune, Volta Space Technologies, Advanced Space, Qwaltec, Axiom, Firefly Aerospace, Voyager Technologies, Amentum, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Astrobotic, the Translational Research Institute for Space Health, and The Planetary Society. Representative Brian Babin of Texas will provide a welcome video to Summit participants. Additional discussions will examine whether the United States must be first to return astronauts to the lunar surface, the role of Texas in the expanding commercial aerospace economy, and how space exploration can provide a source of international cooperation and optimism.

In-person registration remains open for the July 21–23 Summit at the BioScience Research Collaborative at Rice University in Houston. H2M2 2026 will also be available through an online broadcast, welcoming space professionals, students, educators, and members of the public around the world. The 2025 Summit at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., attracted nearly 11,000 online participants. Registration, the complete agenda, speaker information, and online viewing details are available through the Explore Mars summit website at www.exploremars.org/summit/.

About Explore Mars, Inc.

Explore Mars, Inc. is a global nonprofit organization that brings together innovators, pathfinders, and policymakers to help establish a sustainable human presence on Mars. Through conferences, research, education, policy engagement, and collaborative programs, Explore Mars advances the scientific, technical, commercial, and human capabilities required to explore the

Moon and Mars while promoting a peaceful, prosperous, and responsible future in space.

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