

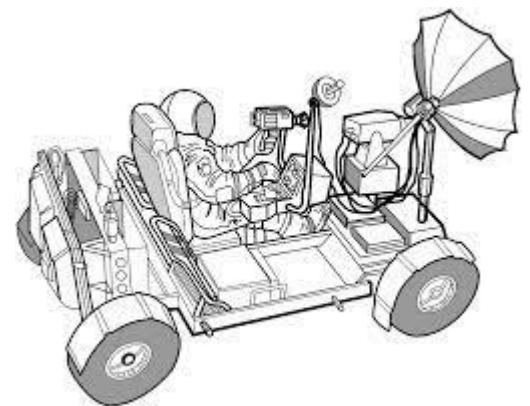
Charles Duke

Biography

Charles Duke is so far the youngest person to have landed on the moon. He was born 1935 in North Carolina, U.S.A.

Charles Duke served as Lunar Module Pilot of Apollo 16 in 1972 where he and John Young landed on the moon, and conducted scientific experiments. Duke was the tenth person to walk upon the surface of the moon.

Apollo 16 (April 16–27, 1972) was launched from John F. Kennedy Space Center and was the fifth manned lunar landing mission. The crew consisted of John Young as Commander, Ken Mattingly as Command Module Pilot, and Charles Duke as Lunar Module Pilot. Apollo 16 was the first scientific expedition to inspect, survey, and sample materials and surface features of a particular rugged region of the moon. John Young and Charles Duke set a record lunar surface stay of 71 hours and 14 minutes. They collected nearly 213 pounds (96 kg) of rock and soil samples. They drove an electric lunar vehicle, Rover-2, popularly called a 'moon buggy', over the roughest surface yet encountered on the moon. So far three moon buggies have been used on the moon, each one being carried to the moon folded up in the Lunar Module's Quadrant 1 Bay. After being unpacked, each was driven an average of 30 km, without major incident. These three lunar vehicles remain on the Moon.



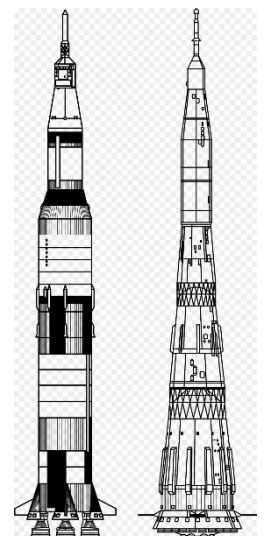
Charles Duke: his personal story, as recorded in Australia on April 4th 1990

I trained as a test pilot in the US air force. In 1966 I was selected to be an astronaut, and in 1972, on April 16th, I was launched on a Saturn rocket to the moon, from the Kennedy Space Centre, becoming became the 10th person to visit the moon. After the launch we travelled 160 km above the earth at about 25,000 km per hour. We travelled twice around the earth and then we were off to the moon.

The Saturn rocket was 120 metres tall and weighed 3 million kilograms. Inside the capsule it was very confined. Out the window we saw the whole circle of the earth, a jewel of colour in the blackness of space. We could see the land, the oceans and the arctic circle. The earth didn't look inhabited. There was no evidence of population. At that time I was not a believer, but later when I became a believer I saw how true the following Bible verses were:

Job 26:7 – God hangs the earth upon nothing, and in Isaiah 40:22 – He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. Who told Job and Isaiah this? No one. God spoke the truth to them.

It was a 3-day journey to the moon, (72 hours) and we arrived on schedule. On the journey we ate dehydrated food in plastic packets. There was no gravity, so



if you let go of it, the food floated around. We had to use a bag to go to the toilet.

We landed on the moon in a valley. Once we landed, we opened the door and had to walk backwards down the ladder. Around us was rock covered with grey dust. The dust was from crushed rock that had formed through meteor impact. There was definitely no life on the moon. There was such a peacefulness on the lunar surface. We saw craters, 1 kilometer in diameter.

For the first five hours John and I conducted scientific experiments. Our suits were very stiff so walking on the moon was not easy. It felt strange. I weighed 75 kg on earth, but on the moon, I weight only 30 kg. The sun was shining the whole 72 hours we were on the moon, because a day on the moon is for two weeks!

The moon is made of the same minerals as the earth, but the rocks are of a different composition. The dust was 4 metres deep, but when you stepped on it, the dust compacted so you didn't sink too deeply, but we left footprints wherever we went. It was easy not to get lost – you just followed your footprints.

We had an electric car which we drove over rough terrain, 3 kilometres from our landing spot. We spent about 8 hours a day over the next two days, collecting rocks and carrying out scientific experiments. We had to be careful not to fall into a crater, because there was no rescue plan. If you fell in, there was no way out.

On the journey home we travelled at a speed of 5000 km per hour, yet there was no sensation of motion, UNTIL we hit the earth's atmosphere. At 3000 metres above the earth the parachutes were deployed and we splashed down into the ocean. We received a hero's welcome. The trip had been a wonderful experience.

But I was soon let down, as I was told that further Apollo missions had been cancelled. The next space flight would be eight years away! I was now 37 years old and out of a job. I had no more goals. What now? I was frustrated.

I needed a new challenge so I left the space program. I decided that I would make lots of money through business. I was successful in business, but I found that no matter how much money I made I lacked a deep satisfaction. I couldn't find peace.

Meanwhile my marriage was falling apart. I gave my family all the material things, but did not give them my time. My wife Dot was unhappy and our love for each other had faded. She had a lot of resentment towards me for putting my whole life into work and not having enough time for the family. She decided to turn to God. God told her that she had to forgive me. He helped her to do this and our relationship started to improve. One night I had a dream that I was on a train, going somewhere unknown. I decided to go with Dot to a Bible study. My question was, "Who is Jesus?" I then saw that Jesus was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He was the driver of the train in my dream. I saw that I was a sinner and I now had to choose to go with Him or not. I started reading the Bible, and finally gave my life to Jesus. I asked Him to be Lord of my life. My marriage was restored and my love for my wife was resurrected. I didn't make another trip to the moon, but I can assure you that walking with Jesus is far more exciting than walking on the moon.