



Artemis II: The Crewed Lunar Flyby

Published On: 14-01-2026

News Context: NASA has scheduled the rollout of the Artemis II mission for early February 2026, marking the first time humans will orbit the Moon in over 50 years.

- **The Mission:** A 10-day flight carrying four astronauts (Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen) around the Moon.
- **Trajectory:** Unlike Artemis III (which will land), Artemis II follows a "**Free-return Trajectory.**" If engines fail, lunar gravity will naturally "slingshot" the Orion spacecraft back to Earth.
- **Key Tests:**
- **O2O System:** Testing optical (laser) communications for high-speed data from deep space.
- **Life Support:** Rigorous testing of the Orion capsule's carbon dioxide scrubbing and radiation shielding.
- **Wholistic Insight:** This is the precursor to the **Gateway** lunar station. For India, this is significant as we recently joined the **Artemis Accords**, paving the way for a future Indian astronaut on a NASA mission.