

# It's time for a new space race

*Dan McCaffery - March 2026*

The day after my 17th birthday, on July 16, 1969 the Apollo 11 astronauts blasted off on their breath-taking journey to the moon.

I well remember the excitement this epic voyage created. Everyone was blown away by it. It was rightly viewed as an astonishing achievement.

My family was staying at our cottage in Kettle Point that summer, which created a bit of a problem for me. If I was going to stay up until 1:30 in the morning to watch the historic landing I would only get a few hours sleep before heading off to the Chemical Valley, where I had a construction job. So I decided to take the next day off, forgoing what was a good chunk of money for a teenager.

That's how thrilled I was about the whole thing.

So how do I feel about NASA's plans to return to the moon this year or next? Strangely, I find myself pretty apathetic about it.

When I was a young lad watching the moon landing I was confident humans would visit Mars before the end of the 20th century. By 2026, if I had thought that far ahead, I would have expected us to be exploring distant worlds.

I think we could have done it, too, with the right political leadership. Instead, we got unimaginative people who decided space travel was no longer a priority.

It didn't have to be this way. For many decades flying machines advanced at an amazing pace. Indeed, the first airplane, which lifted off from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903, flew for only 12 seconds, covering a scant 120 feet. Just 16 years later, in 1919, Alcock and Brown made the first trans-Atlantic flight. By the 1940s men were streaking across the skies in jets. The first moon mission, which came just 66 years after Kitty Hawk, saw people fly 376,000 kilometres to reach their destination.

So, no, I can't get worked up about the fact we're finally going back to a place we first visited nearly six decades ago.

I think we should forget about the moon and concentrate on colonizing Mars, or maybe the Saturn moon known as Titan.

From what I've read Titan is a better bet than Mars. The radiation on the Red Planet is so deadly that people could only survive there if they lived underground, like troglodytes.

Titan, on the other hand, has an atmosphere that's thick enough to protect humans from radiation. Some scientists say people could walk around with only an oxygen mask and warm clothes. Titan also has plenty of hydrocarbons for fuel. More importantly, it apparently has water.

I don't think we should lose our enthusiasm for space exploration. But we should be looking forward, not glancing backwards.