# The moon landing and the soaring cost of space tourism amid climate change



The Apollo 11 mission, which culminated in Neil Armstrong's historic first steps on the moon in 1969, is a defining moment in human history. His words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," encapsulate the spirit of exploration during an era that was simultaneously witnessing the emergence of the environmental movement, with organisations like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth taking their initial steps.

In stark contrast, the current climate crisis presents a world grappling with increasingly severe weather patterns and global temperature shifts. As reported, by 2025, headlines frequently illustrate the consequences of global heating, which has resulted in intensified storms, floods, heatwaves, and wildfires. This increasing urgency highlights the stark reality that we are approaching a critical threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming.

Recent events involving celebrities and private space travel have drawn scrutiny regarding their impact on environmental issues. During a descent back to Earth, pop star Katy Perry opted to sing "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong, prompting reflections on the beauty of the planet. Following the flight, Lauren Sanchez, the fiancée of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, expressed the need to "Protect this planet we're on, this is the only one we've got." However, commentary regarding the significant environmental repercussions of such spaceflights remained notably absent.

The billionaire space tourism trend poses its own set of concerns. While Blue Origin, the company founded by Bezos, asserts that the only byproduct of its New Shepard rocket engine is water vapour, critics highlight the broader implications. Eloise Marais, a professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Air Quality at University College London, noted that water vapour acts as a greenhouse gas and can disrupt the upper layers of the atmosphere. Marais underscored that this alteration impacts ozone layer integrity and contributes to climate change, suggesting that the cumulative effects of increased rocket launches may pose significant risks to the ozone layer.

Human space travel is not devoid of potential benefits related to climate change, as astronaut Tim Peake highlighted during the COP26 conference in Glasgow. Peake stated, "I personally am a fan of using space for science and for the benefit of everybody back on Earth, so in that respect, I feel disappointed that space is being tarred with that brush." Nonetheless, it is important to discern that scientific missions focused on addressing climate challenges differ markedly from space tourism conducted by high-profile individuals.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nasa.gov/history/apollo-11-mission-overview/> - This link supports the historical significance and details of the Apollo 11 mission, including Neil Armstrong's first steps on the Moon.
* <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/> - This link provides information about Greenpeace, an environmental organization mentioned in the context of emerging environmental movements around the time of Apollo 11.
* <https://www.ipcc.ch/> - This URL pertains to climate change information and the urgency of environmental issues, including global temperature shifts and severe weather patterns.
* <https://www.blueorigin.com/new-shepard/> - This link details Blue Origin's New Shepard spacecraft and its environmental claims, such as producing only water vapour as a byproduct.
* <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/glasgow-climate-pact> - This URL references the COP26 conference, where discussions about using space technology to address climate challenges occurred, aligning with Tim Peake's sentiments.