

The gravity of their experience hasn't quite set in for the Artemis II astronauts

"We have loved living in Orion," said Christina Koch, mission specialist on Artemis II. "In fact, we've all said that sometimes you can forget where you really are, because we're in this small space that just gives us everything we need."

Living in microgravity makes the cramped quarters seem a little more accommodating. The astronauts can take advantage of every corner of the spacecraft.

"It is bigger in microgravity, and yes, we are bumping into each other 100 percent of the time," Koch said. "A phrase that you often hear in the cabin is, 'Don't move your foot. I'm just going to reach for something right under it.'"

NASA named the crew members for the Artemis II mission three years ago. Now, the astronauts will have their names in the history books. With Artemis II, the number of people alive who have traveled to the vicinity of the Moon has nearly doubled. Just five of the 24 men who flew to the Moon are still alive. Four of them walked on its surface.

"I will miss this camaraderie. I will miss being this close with this many people and having a common purpose, a common mission," Koch said. "This sense of teamwork is something that you don't usually get as an adult. I mean, we are close, like brothers and sisters, and that is a privilege we will never have again."

One of the most poignant moments of the mission was a tribute to Wiseman's late wife, Carroll, who died of cancer in 2020. On Monday, as the crew neared the Moon, Hansen radioed down the crew's request to name a crater for Carroll.

"When Jeremy spelled Carol's name, C-A-R-R-O-L- L, I think, for me, that's when I was overwhelmed with emotion," Wiseman said. "And I looked over and Christina was crying. I put my hand down on Jeremy's hand as he was still talking. I could just tell he was trembling, and we all pretty much broke down right there. And just for me, personally, that was kind of the pinnacle moment of the mission. For me, that was, I think, where the four of us were the most forged, the most bonded, and we came out of that really focused on the day ahead."

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