

Apollo-mission Images of the Earth



(Part 2, Earthrise images)

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This is Part 2 of an article that featured images of the Earth from Apollo missions. While some of those images were reproduced on postal items as Earthrise images (images of the Earth as seen above the horizon of the Moon), they were actually artistic creations and not real Earthrise images. This article will feature real Earthrise photos from Apollo missions and compare them to postal items that have reproductions of those photos. Earthrise images are not quite as common as non-Earthrise images but are still plentiful on postal items.

Summary table of Apollo-mission Earthrise images

The following table summarizes the Apollo-mission Earthrise images that are covered in this article. The authors have found 9 different Apollo-mission Earthrise photos taken from Apollo-8 through Apollo-17, on about 200 postal items. The previous article discussed only those matchups with 2 or more postal items, leaving the rest of the matchups for readers to check on the authors' website. This article will include all known Apollo Earthrise photos on postal items, even for those with only one match.

Apollo mission	Date (yyyy-mm-dd)	NASA photo number	Approximate number of postal items (stamps + launch covers)
Apollo-mission Earthrise images			
Apollo-8	1968-12-24	AS08-14-2383	85 + 23 = 108
Apollo-8	1968-12-24	AS08-14-2392	1 + 0 = 1
Apollo-10	1969-05-23	AS10-27-3887	1 + 0 = 1
Apollo-10	1969-05-23	AS10-27-3889	8 + 2 = 10
Apollo-11	1969-07-20	AS11-44-6555	48 + 3 = 51
Apollo-11	1969-07-21	AS11-44-6642	31 + 2 = 33
Apollo-11	1969-07-22	AS11-44-6649	2 + 0 = 2
Apollo-16	1972-04-19	AS16-120-19187	1 + 0 = 1
Apollo-17	1972-12-16	AS17-152-23274	2 + 3 = 5

It took some effort to match Earthrise images found on postal items with real Apollo Earthrise photos. There are many fake/made-up Earthrise images on postal items employed by the stamp designer for artistic reasons. In addition, there are a few examples of Earthrise images that are reproduced on postal items without the Earth being above the horizon of the Moon: those Earthrises are therefore depicted as non-Earthrise images!

For all but the first case, only one example of each Apollo Earthrise photo found on a postal item is presented in this article. Readers should refer to the authors' website for other postal items (when more than one item is available) with reproductions of the same Apollo Earthrise photo.

Image and stamp reproduction matchups

Our first matchup is for an Apollo-8 Earthrise image from 24 December 1968, taken when the astronauts were orbiting the Moon. This is NASA photo number AS08-14-2383. The authors have found the same image on 108 postal items, a primary one being a stamp issued by the USA in 1969 celebrating the Apollo-8 mission to the Moon. Note that the Earthrise image on the stamp is a good reproduction of the overall image, but there are some artistic elements in the details of the depiction of Earth itself.

For comparison, a USA cover from 2021 with a Coverscape cachet correctly identifies the Earthrise image and accurately reproduces Earth as seen in the original image, but the rising Earth is placed directly above the Moon's horizon (in the original, Earth is higher in the lunar sky). Another difference is that the Moon's horizon on the cover is tilted up from left to right, whereas the Moon's horizon is tilted up from right to left in the Apollo photo and on the USA stamp.



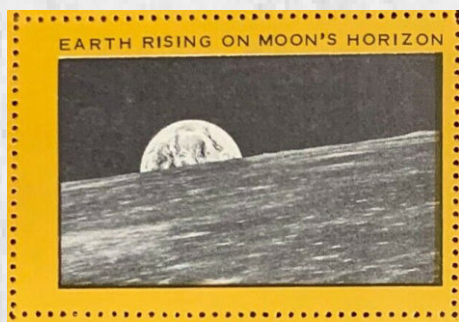
(left) Apollo-8 Earthrise image from 1968 (AS08-14-2383);
 (centre) United States *Scott 1371 Michel 981* (1969);
 (right) USA cover with Coverscape cachet (2021).

Another Earthrise image from Apollo-8, also from 24 December 1968 in a subsequent lunar orbit, is Apollo photo AS08-14-2392. This image was found by the authors on only one postal item, a stamp issued by Manama in 1972. However, to match the Apollo-8 photo, the stamp image must be flipped horizontally. The Earth image on the stamp is very small, so a magnified detail of the Earthrise from the stamp is presented as well. This detail image matches the Apollo Earthrise photo but brings out some artistic changes, particularly the surface of the Moon being depicted as green instead of tan or brown.



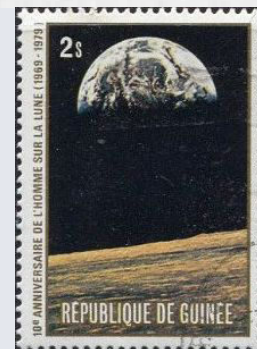
(left) Apollo-8 Earthrise from 1968 (AS08-14-2392);
 (centre) Manama *Michel 963A* (1972) flipped horizontally;
 (right) Manama *Michel 963A* detail (also flipped).

Next, we present two Apollo-10 Earthrise images on postal items. The first is from 23 May 1969 and is Apollo photo AS10-27-3887. Earth is on the horizon of the Moon and is otherwise fully illuminated. The only postal items with this image are Cinderellas (poster stamps) issued in 1969 in a variety of border colours (yellow, red, green, and blue). The cloud features in the Cinderella match those in the Apollo Earthrise photo, and the horizon of the Moon has the same slant in each image.



(left) Apollo-10 Earthrise from 1969 (AS10-27-3887);
(right) USA Cinderella (1969) black-and-white reproduction.

The second Apollo-10 Earthrise image is very close in time to the first one, but the Earth is farther above the Moon's horizon. The Apollo astronauts took a series of Earthrise photos with Earth progressively higher above the Moon's horizon, giving an Earthrise effect. Otherwise, cloud features are similar, as is the slant of the Moon's horizon. The authors have found 10 postal items with this Earthrise image, one being a stamp issued by the Guinea Republic in 1980. Earth is farther above the Moon's horizon in the stamp reproduction but its cloud features are reproduced nicely, as is the slant of the day-night terminator (from which we conclude that north on Earth is to the right in this image).



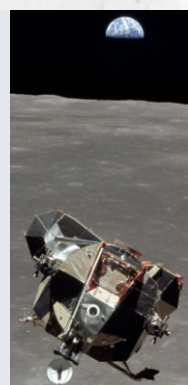
(left) Apollo-10 Earthrise from 1969 (AS10-27-3889);
(right) Guinea Republic Scott 808 Michel 803A (1980).



(left) Apollo-11 Earthrise from 1969 (AS11-44-6555);
(right) Gibraltar Scott 1157b Michel 1290 (2008).

Next are three Apollo-11 Earthrise images that are reproduced on postal items. The first is Apollo photo number AS11-44-6555 from 20 July 1969, the day of the first Moon landing. NASA provides an animation of these Earthrise images, from which the first image in the animation has been extracted. That photo shows Earth at the Moon's horizon. As an example of the 51 postal items found by the authors with this Earthrise image, a stamp issued by Gibraltar in 2008 for the 50th anniversary of NASA nicely reproduces it.

The next Apollo-11 Earthrise image is NASA photo number AS11-44-6642 from 21 July 1969. In this photo, the Lunar Module ascent stage with Moon-walking astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin Jr. approaches for its rendezvous with the Apollo Command Module. A small partially illuminated image of Earth is above the horizon of the Moon. One of the better examples of the 33 postal items with reproductions of this Apollo photo is a stamp issued by the Cook Islands in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the Apollo-11 Moon landing.



(left) Apollo-11 Earthrise from 1969 (AS11-44-6642);
(right) Cook Islands Scott 1635a Michel 2244 (2019).



The third Apollo-11 Earthrise image is NASA photo number AS11-44-6649 from 22 July 1969. This Earthrise was found by the authors on only 2 postal items. One of them, a stamp issued by Djibouti in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the Apollo-11 Moon landing, has the partially illuminated Earth image from the Apollo photo, but Earth is shown very close to the Moon's horizon.

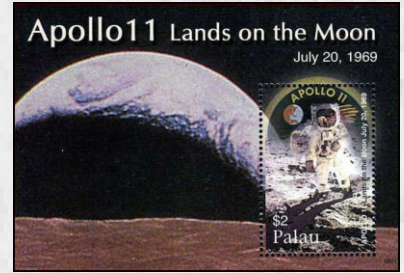
(left) Apollo-11 Earthrise from 1969 (AS11-44-6649);
(right) Djibouti Scott 1782c Michel 3118 (2019).

Only one postal item of an Apollo-16 Earthrise image, NASA photo number AS16-120-19187 from 19 April 1972, has been found. It is a souvenir sheet of one stamp issued by Djibouti in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the Apollo-11 Moon landing. The sheet has been rotated left 90 degrees to match the Apollo Earthrise photo, which is on the stamp just in front of John F. Kennedy's forehead. A magnified detail image of the Earth image is also provided to help clarify the match with the Apollo Earthrise photo.



(left) Apollo-16 Earthrise from 1972 (AS16-120-19187);
(centre) Djibouti Scott 1654 Michel BL1283 (2019) rotated left 90 degrees;
(right) Djibouti Scott 1654 Michel BL1283 detail (also rotated).

The final Earthrise image to be presented in this article is from Apollo-17, NASA photo number AS17-152-23274, taken 16 December 1972. This was the last Apollo Moon-landing mission. The Earthrise photo has been found by the authors on 5 postal items, one being a souvenir sheet of 1 stamp issued by Palau in 2006. The Earthrise in the left margin is large and rotated right slightly from the Apollo reference photo but is otherwise a large and good reproduction.



(left) Apollo-17 Earthrise from 1972 (AS17-152-23274);
(right) Palau Scott 864 Michel BL211 (2006).

Summary

In summary, these 11 matchups represent hundreds of postal items that reproduce actual Apollo-mission Earthrise photos. Interested readers will find numerous additional Apollo photo/postal item matchups in the authors' website.

Online and author contact information

We were greatly assisted by Peter Hoffman, who provided many Scott and Michel numbers for the postal items in this article and the associated web page. A checklist of postal items showing the Apollo-mission images is available at <http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/Apollo-images.htm>, with separate sections for each Apollo image. The authors would like to hear from anyone who knows of additional reproductions of the Apollo-mission photos on postal items. We will update the online details as new information is received. E-mail correspondence with the authors is welcome. Don Hillger can be reached at don.hillger@colostate.edu and Garry Toth at gmt.varia@gmail.com.

