ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

November 2026

Christina H. Koch

NASA Astronaut

Summary:
Christina Koch [pronunciation: “Cook”] is an explorer and engineer who became astronaut in 2013. She currently serves as NASA’s acting deputy chief engineer, helping lead the agency’s engineers in technical oversight, mission readiness, and engineering excellence across NASA’s missions. She most recently served as a mission specialist on NASA’s Artemis II mission around the Moon in 2026. During the mission, the Artemis II crew completed a historic lunar flyby, marking humanity’s return to the vicinity of the Moon for the first time in more than 50 years. Prior to Artemis II, Koch spent 328 consecutive days living and working aboard the International Space Station as part of Expeditions 59, 60, and 61. During that mission, she launched aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft and participated in the first all-female spacewalks. Between her long-duration spaceflight and Artemis II assignment, Koch served as chief of the Assigned Crew Branch in the Astronaut Office and completed a rotation as assistant for technical integration to the center director at NASA’s Johnson Space Center. Prior to becoming an astronaut, her career included space science instrument development and remote field engineering in both the Antarctic and Arctic. Her hobbies span technical, outdoor, and community serving pursuits.

Detailed Biography:

Personal:
Koch is a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan; grew up in Jacksonville, North Carolina; and resided in Livingston, Montana, when she was selected to join the astronaut corps. Growing up spending summers on her family’s farm in Michigan instilled her with a passion for hard work and contribution. Her hobbies include surfing, rock and ice climbing, programming, community service, triathlons, yoga, backpacking, woodworking, photography, and travel.

Education:
Koch attended North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she earned Bachelor of Science degrees in electrical engineering and physics; a Master of Science degree in electrical engineering; and studied abroad at the University of Ghana. She attended high school at the North Carolina School of Science and Math in Durham, North Carolina, and White Oak High School in Jacksonville, North Carolina. She later received an honorary doctorate from North Carolina State University.

Previous Career Experience:
Koch’s experience prior to becoming an astronaut spanned both space science instrument development and remote scientific field engineering. Her career began as an electrical engineer at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), where she contributed to instruments on several NASA space science missions. Koch then became a research associate in the United States Antarctic Program, which included a yearlong stay, with a winter-over at the Admunsen-Scott South Pole Station and season at Palmer Station. While in this role, she served as a member of the firefighting and search and rescue teams. Koch then returned to space science instrument development as an electrical engineer at the Johns

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Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, where she contributed to instruments on NASA missions, including Juno and the Van Allen Probes. Koch then returned to remote scientific field work with tours at Palmer Station in Antarctica and Summit Station in Greenland. Next, joining the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, she continued work at remote scientific bases, serving as a field engineer in Utqiagvik, Alaska, and as station chief of the American Samoa Observatory. Throughout her career, she has done technical instructing, volunteer tutoring, and educational outreach.

NASA Non-flight Experience:
Koch participated in the NASA Academy program in 2001 and worked as an electrical engineer at Goddard early in her career, contributing to space science missions in X-ray astrophysics. She was selected in 2013 as one of eight members of the 21st NASA astronaut class and completed astronaut candidate training and Navy primary flight training. Her first space flight was a long-duration mission on the space station, spanning 2019 to 2020. After her spaceflight, Koch served as branch chief of the assigned crew branch in the astronaut office. She then went on a rotation as assistant for technical integration for the center director at NASA's Johnson Space Center. Koch then served as mission specialist on NASA's Artemis II mission around the moon. She currently serves as NASA's acting deputy chief engineer, helping lead the agency's engineers in technical oversight, mission readiness, and engineering excellence across NASA's programs and projects.

Spaceflight Experience:
Koch launched on March 14, 2019, from the Baikonur Cosmodrome on the Soyuz MS-12 spacecraft with Roscosmos cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin and NASA astronaut Nick Hague. She returned to Earth on February 6, 2020, on the MS-13 Soyuz spacecraft with Roscosmos cosmonaut Alexander Skvortsov and ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Luca Parmitano. Serving as a flight engineer on the space station for expeditions 59, 60, and 61, she and her crewmates contributed to hundreds of experiments in science and technology development. Some of the scientific highlights she directly contributed to were robotic operations for upgrades to the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, growing protein crystals for pharmaceutical research, and testing 3D biological printers in microgravity. Koch conducted six spacewalks, including the first three all-female spacewalks, totaling 42 hours and 15 minutes.

On April 1, 2026, Koch launched on the Artemis II mission from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida on an SLS (Space Launch System) rocket as part of the first crewed flight of the SLS and Orion spacecraft. The astronauts completed a historic lunar flyby, marking humanity's return to the vicinity of the Moon for the first time in more than 50 years. They tested the life support systems and manual flying qualities of Orion, along with many first-time flight demonstrations. The crew splashed down on April 10, 2026, off the coast of San Diego, completing a nearly 10-day journey that took them 252,756 miles from home at their farthest distance from Earth.

She has spent a total of 338 days in space across her two missions.

Awards/Honors:
United States Congress Antarctic Service Medal with Winter-Over distinction, 2005; NASA Group Achievement Award, NASA Suzaku Mission X-ray Spectrometer, 2005; Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, Invention of the Year nominee, 2009; NASA Group Achievement Award, NASA Juno Mission Jupiter Energetic Particle Detector Instrument, 2012; Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence, Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, 2020; Astronautics Engineer Award, National Space Club & Foundation, 2020; Princess of Asturias Award for Concord, 2026; Distinguished Service Medal, 2026; Space Exploration Medal, 2026; Congressional Space Medal of Honor, 2026; Anne Morrow Lindbergh Award - Outstanding Women in Aerospace, 2026; STARMUS Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication, 2026.