

Clark Cortez Astronaut Van "Apollo 11" (USA, 1969)

BUSES

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The short transfer for "one giant leap for mankind"

During anyone's lifetime, there are events that are so historic that the whole world pays attention. During the post-war years, no single technical program attracted the attention of millions around the globe more than the U.S. manned space program to land men on the Moon! As Apollo flights progressed in technical difficulty, Apollo 11, that was crewed by Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin, and Michael Collins was scheduled to achieve the first manned Moon landing in 1969. On July 16th, 1969, millions around the world watched intently on live television as the massive Saturn V rocket lifted off at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

In spite of all who watched the Apollo 11 mission ascend into the heavens, few actually knew how the Apollo 11 crew was transported to board their massive rocket and spacecraft. NASA employees who were part of the all-important launch crew knew clearly that the three Astronauts did not walk from the NASA crew building to the imposing launch platform. To complete the short distance

from the crew operations and checkout building to the launch platform, a special van was purchased that became known as "the Astronaut Van". It was technically known as the Astronaut Transfer Van or simply, the Astrovan. This small van was not a production model, and it was custom-built for this unique purpose. The interior space was just large enough to accommodate the three Astronauts suited up for their flight. Although the van was acquired to transport Apollo astronauts and was part of the historic moon landing flight that began on July 16, 1969, it was also used to transport NASA employees to various points on the expansive grounds of Cape Kennedy. When NASA transitioned to the STS (Shuttle Transport System), the Van was too small to carry the larger number of crewmembers that boarded the Shuttle Orbiter. In time, the famed white van with the large NASA logo was retired and placed in storage. This decision triggered resistance from the Astronauts since the familiar vehicle had become a part of the

mission routine and they had come to love it over the years of the Apollo program. Today the van is part of the exhibition at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

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