2026

People return to the Moon's distance, and a rocket's upper stage comes home from orbit.

So far this year: the first crewed flight around the Moon since 1972, an AI result checked by outside mathematicians, speech restored through a brain implant, and the first catch of a Starship upper stage after a day in orbit. Births in the U.S. hit a new low.

What rose

April. Artemis II carries Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen around the Moon on a nine-day flight, farther from Earth than any people before. Source: Artemis II

May. A general-purpose OpenAI model disproves Paul Erdős's 1946 conjecture on unit distances in the plane; outside mathematicians check the construction. Source: eWeek

September. In Neuralink's VOICE trial, a man with ALS speaks audibly through a brain implant. The device is investigational, not approved. Source: Tesla North

September. OpenAI publishes a Lean-checked proof that the Navier–Stokes equations can blow up. Not yet recognized by the Clay Institute; credit is disputed. Source: Science News

November. On Flight 15, Starship's upper stage is caught by its launch tower after about 22 hours in orbit; the booster is lost. Source: Starship flight 15

What fell or stalled

The U.S. birth rate set a new record low in final 2025 data. Source: CDC NCHS

Version 1, November 16, 2026. Drafted with AI from public sources and checked against the source linked for each entry. Not yet reviewed by Nicholas Niehaus. Corrections are welcome and are logged publicly.
ascentofthewest.com/years/2026/