

See Earth through the eyes of a Mercury-bound spacecraft saying goodbye to home

ESA and JAXA's BepiColombo Mercury mission took a spin around Earth and captured some poignant views.

Spacecraft are able to give us a very different perspective on our planet than we normally get. BepiColombo, a dual-spacecraft mission, flew by Earth on a farewell tour on the way to its ultimate destination of Mercury. It captured us in stark black and white as it went.



BepiColombo launched in October 2018 but came back for a visit this week to use Earth's gravity to help steer it toward Mercury. The images it sent back are partly selfies and partly Earth portraits.

The mission is a joint project from the European Space Agency (ESA) and Japan's space agency JAXA. They released a series of Earth views on Friday, including some dramatic GIFs of the flyby.

Now imagine you are watching this in real life listening to my awesome @Spotify soundtrack! What would be your favourite #BepiColomboEarthFlyby song? <https://t.co/owVMd1juQq>

pic.twitter.com/yiEYXXPzqk

— Bepi (@ESA_Bepi) April 10, 2020

The spacecraft snuggled up pretty close to Earth, coming within 7,900 miles (12,700 kilometers). It spent 34 minutes in our planet's shadow before emerging back into the light.

"These selfies from space are humbling, showing our planet, the common home that we share, in one of the most troubling and uncertain periods many of us have gone through," Günther Hasinger, ESA's director of science, said in a statement on Friday.

BepiColombo won't reach Mercury until 2025. The spacecraft's short goodbye to Earth is just the next step in a very long mission. but it left us with some lovely views of our planet as a farewell gift.

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