

MARS

The fourth planet from the Sun in our Solar System, Mars is sometimes called the Red Planet because of its orange-red color. In the summer, temperatures on Mars reach about 27°C (81°F). In the winter, temperatures drop to -133°C (-207°F). Mars's atmosphere is made mostly of carbon dioxide gas. Some oxygen exists in the atmosphere, but not enough for people to be able to breathe. Mars is the only planet whose surface can be seen in detail from Earth. It looks like a bright red star.

How Big Is Mars?

Mars measures about 6,794 kilometers (4,219 mi.) across, which is a little over half the width of Earth. Mars is the second-smallest planet in the Solar System, after Mercury.

How Long Are a Day and Year on Mars?

It takes Mars about 687 Earth days to orbit the Sun, so a year on Mars is about 687 Earth days long. It takes Mars about 24.62 Earth hours to spin around once on its axis. A day on Mars is about the same length as a day on Earth.

What Is Mars Made Of?

Scientists think Mars's core is very dense and made of molten iron and sulphur. They also think Mars's mantle is made of hot, molten rock. Iron-rich dust covers the dry, rocky surface. The rusty iron gives Mars its red color. Low-lying plains fill the northern hemisphere, but the southern hemisphere has thousands of craters. Ice caps composed of frozen carbon dioxide and water cover the north and south poles of Mars.

How Many Moons Does Mars Have?

Mars has two tiny moons, Phobos (FOH-boss) and Deimos (DEE-moss). Both moons are believed to be made of rock and ice. Phobos is about 22 kilometers (14 mi.) across. Deimos is about 13 kilometers (8 mi.) across.

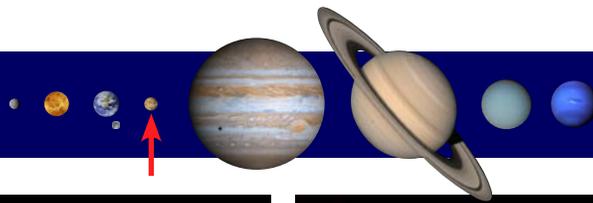


Olympus Mons, the largest volcano in the Solar System, is as large as the state of Arizona.



- Mars was named after the Roman god of war. It was probably given this name because of its orange-red color, which represents blood and war.
- Mars has the largest volcano in the Solar System, Olympus Mons. It is 624 kilometers (386 mi.) across and 25 kilometers (16 mi.) high. Olympus Mons is three times the height of Mount Everest.
- Water currently exists on Mars as ice at the poles and in frozen layers in some places under the soil. Evidence suggests that liquid water flowed over parts of the surface of Mars long ago.

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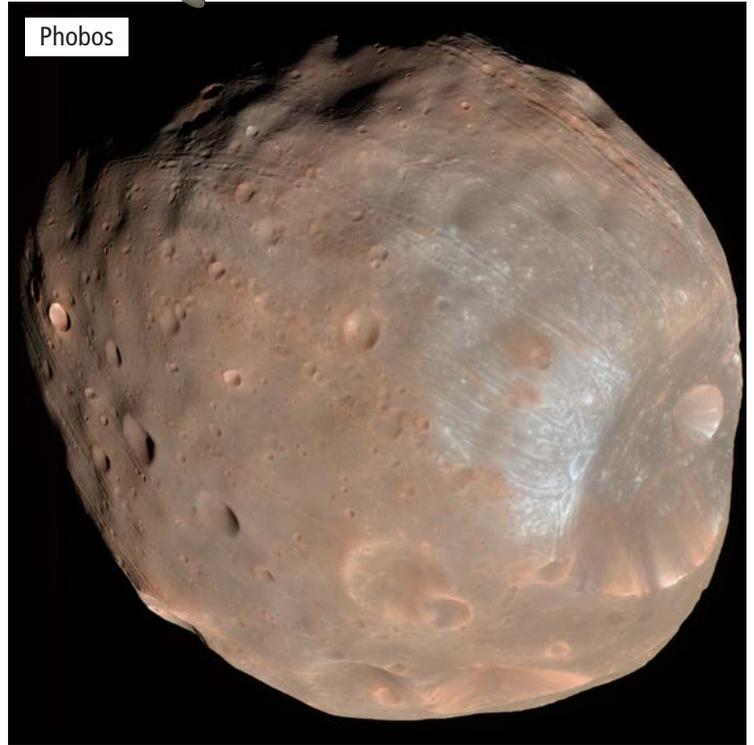


Deimos



The smaller of Mars's two moon, Deimos takes about thirty hours to orbit the planet. Scientists think the moon's odd shape comes from it being hit by a large meteorite.

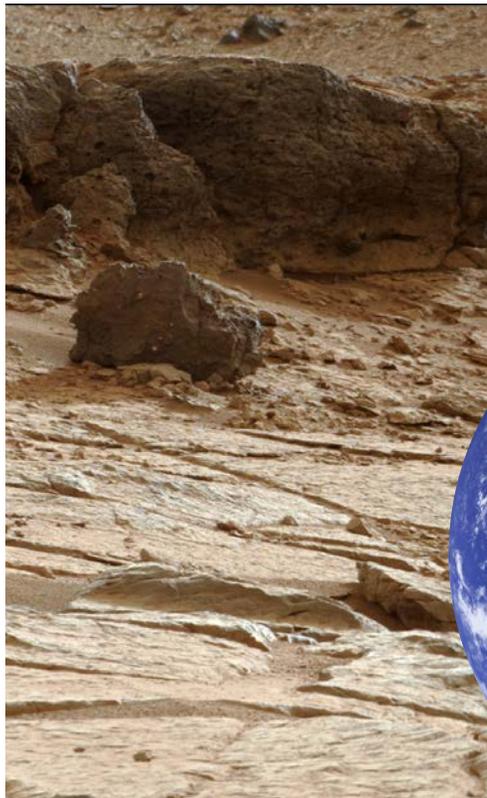
Phobos



Like Deimos, Phobos, Mars's larger moon, is oddly shaped because of impacts with meteorites. The moon is actually on a collision course with Mars, falling about 1.8 meters (6ft.) every 100 years.



The *Curiosity* rover was sent to explore Mars in 2012.



The Martian surface is covered in iron-rich dust and rock.

The Size
of Earth
Compared
to Mars

