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China Set to Send 3 Astronauts on Longest Crewed Mission Yet

China is preparing to send three astronauts to live on its space station for six months—a new milestone for a program that has advanced rapidly in recent years.

It will be China's longest crewed space mission and set a record for the most time spent in space by Chinese astronauts. The Shenzhou-13 spaceship is expected to be launched into space on a Long March-2F rocket early Saturday morning from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northwestern China.

Phys.org



Captain Kirk is in Space!

Blue Origin successfully launched its second crewed flight with four passengers aboard, including William Shatner, the actor who famously played Captain Kirk in the original "Star Trek" on Oct. 13, 2021.

Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket and capsule also carried, Blue Origin's vice president of mission and flight operations Audrey Powers and paying passengers Chris Boshuizen, co-founder of the Earth-observation company Planet, and Glen de Vries, vice chair for life sciences and healthcare at the French software company Dassault Systèmes.

Space.com

NASA Plans Careful Restart for Mars Helicopter After Quiet Period



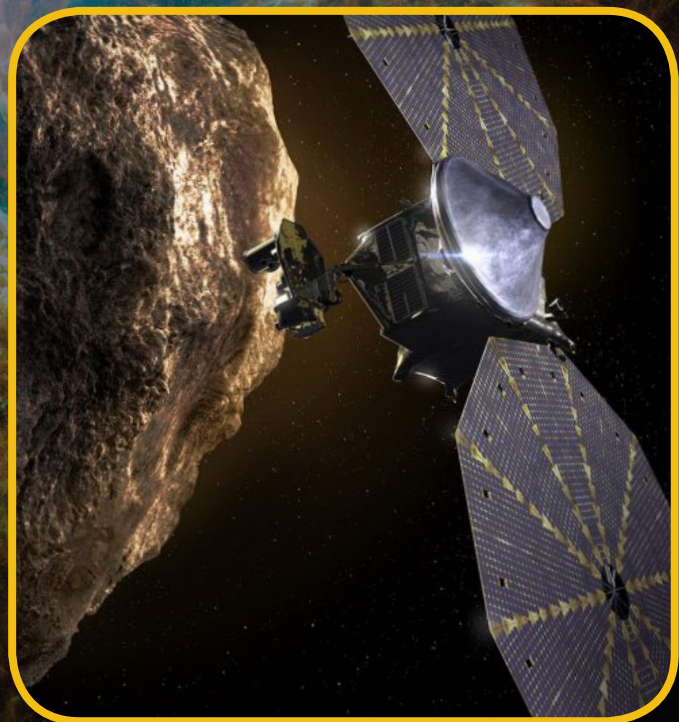
The Mars helicopter Ingenuity is on its own without NASA's guidance for two weeks as the sun interferes with communications to the Red Planet.

Sometime around Oct. 14, NASA plans to check in with the helicopter and the Mars rover Perseverance. Previous rovers have endured so-called solar conjunction communication dropouts, but never has a tiny aircraft sat alone on the planet for so long with no Earthly contact.

MarsDaily.com

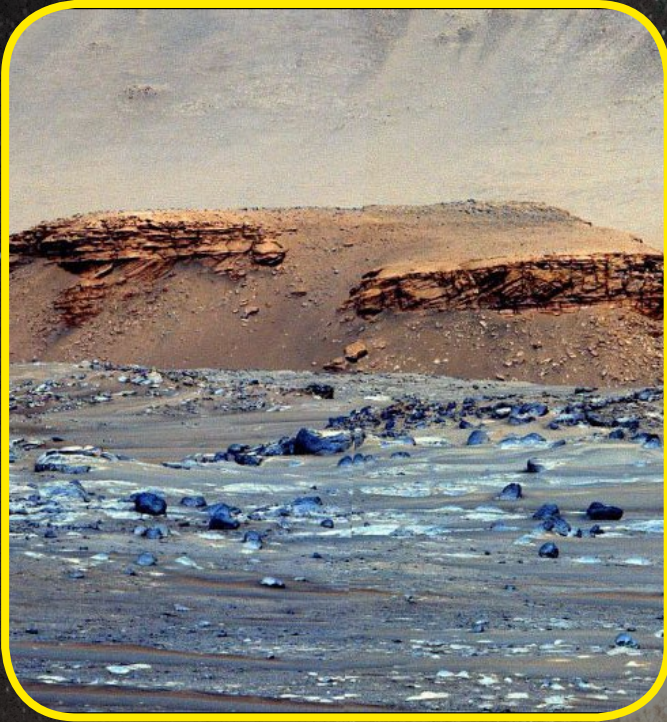
Lucy Spacecraft to Launch Saturday

The Lucy spacecraft – named for a famous fossilized skeleton found in 1974 in Africa – is set to launch from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Saturday, October 16, 2021. With the help of three gravity assists from Earth, Lucy will travel almost 4 billion miles (6 billion km) in 12 years, exploring one asteroid in the main asteroid belt and seven of Jupiter's Trojan asteroids. The Trojans move in Jupiter's orbit around the sun and have never been explored before. And scientists view them as fossils that are left over from the formation of the solar system.



EarthSky.org

NASA Perseverance Rover Images Confirm Jezero Crater Is an Ancient Martian Lake



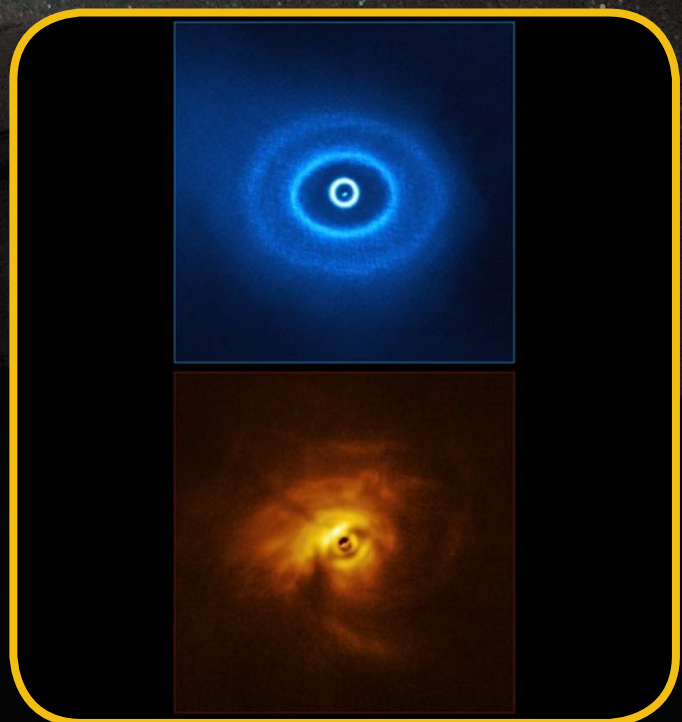
The first scientific analysis of images taken by NASA's Perseverance rover has now confirmed that Mars' Jezero crater — which today is a dry, wind-eroded depression — was once a quiet lake, fed steadily by a small river some 3.7 billion years ago.

The images also reveal evidence that the crater endured flash floods. This flooding was energetic enough to sweep up large boulders from tens of miles upstream and deposit them into the lakebed, where the massive rocks lie today.

SciTechDaily.com

This May Be the First Exoplanet Found Orbiting Three Stars

Residing 1,300 light-years away in the famous constellation Orion the Hunter is the triple-star system GW Orionis. Of its three stars, two closely orbit each other, while a third orbits the pair. These stellar triplets are young, still surrounded by a disk of dust, gas, and debris left over from their formation. And this disk, called a protoplanetary disk, has caught astronomers' attention for several reasons — not least of which because it might harbor the first known exoplanet orbiting a trio of stars.



Astronomy.com

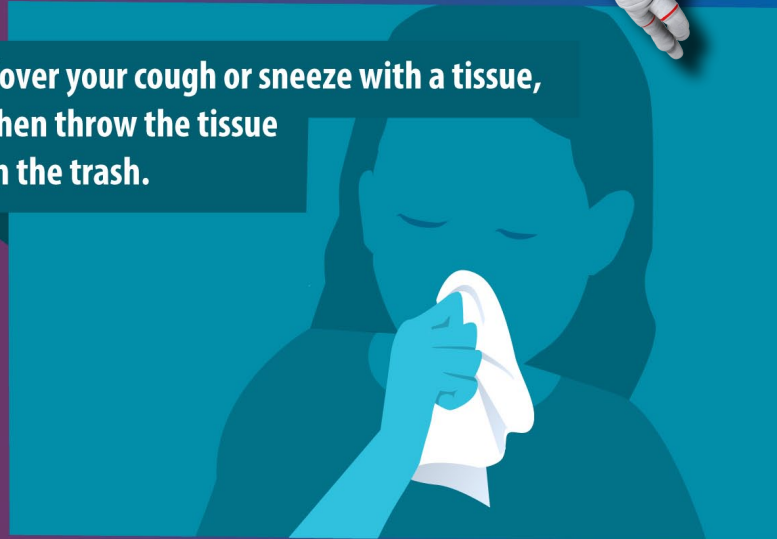
How to Protect Ourselves?



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



Astronomy Picture of the Day

NGC 7293: The Helix Nebula

Image Credit & Copyright: *Ignacio Diaz Bobillo*

A mere seven hundred light years from Earth, toward the constellation Aquarius, a sun-like star is dying. Its last few thousand years have produced the Helix Nebula (NGC 7293), a well studied and nearby example of a Planetary Nebula, typical of this final phase of stellar evolution. A total of 90 hours of exposure time have gone in to creating this expansive view of the nebula. Combining narrow band image data from emission lines of hydrogen atoms in red and oxygen atoms in blue-green hues, it shows remarkable details of the Helix's brighter inner region about 3 light-years across. The white dot at the Helix's center is this Planetary Nebula's hot, central star. A simple looking nebula at first glance, the Helix is now understood to have a surprisingly complex geometry.

apod.nasa.gov



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