

## Mars Facts

- Mars is the fourth planet from the sun. It is the last terrestrial planet. The Romans named it after the God of War. Because it is red, it made them think of blood and war.
- The planet is orange/red due to iron oxide in the soil and rocks.
- The surface is covered by red dusty soil, which is blown around by the wind, in the very cold, thin atmosphere. Dust storms can blanket the planet for months.
- The planet is covered in craters, mountains, valleys deeper and longer than the Grand Canyon.
  - The Canyon Valles Marinaris is 4677 km wide (about from BC to Ontario)
  - Volcanoes can be 27 km high (Galt to Ayers Cliff).
- Millions of years ago, water flowed on the surface. Some may still be hidden in underground reservoirs.
- Lots of ice covers the ice caps. Some of the ice is frozen water and some is frozen carbon dioxide (dry ice).
- The daytime skies are pink, the sunsets are beautiful and there is a lot of desert scenery.
- Viking Landers were sent to Mars to try to determine if there was/is life on Mars. Scientists still do not agree about what was found when the frozen soil was brought back to Earth and thawed out.
- The path of the orbit is eccentric. For several months, the planet appears to move backwards in relation to other stars. It then makes a loop before resuming its forward course.

The following chart compares Earth and Mars on several characteristics:

Characteristic	Earth	Mars
Distance from the Sun	150 million km	228 million km
Revolution in earth days	365.25 days	687 days
Rotation in earth days	23 hr, 56 min, 4 sec	24 hrs, 37 min, 23 sec
Equatorial diameter in kilometers	12757 km	6793 km
Atmosphere main gases	Nitrogen 78%, oxygen 21%, other 1%	Carbon dioxide 95%, Nitrogen 2.7%, Oxygen 0.13%, other about 2%
Average Temperature	15°C	-63°C
Surface gravity Earth 1	1	0.38
Number of known satellites (moons)	1	2
Rings	0	0