

Amazing facts about astronomy

Written by Administrator

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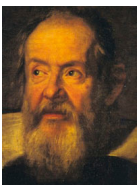


Even though man has studied the heavens for thousands of years, we still know very little about the Universe we live in. And as we continue to learn more, we are consistently amazed, and sometimes confused, by what we learn. Here is a collection of amazing, interesting, and strange astronomy facts, in no particular order.

Scientists believe that we can only see about 5% of the matter in the Universe. The rest is made up of invisible matter (called Dark Matter) and a mysterious form of energy known as Dark Energy.

Neutron stars are so dense, that a soup can full of neutron star material would have more mass than the Moon.

The Sun produces so much energy, that every second the core releases the equivalent of 100 billion nuclear bombs.



Galileo Galilei is often incorrectly credited with the invention of the telescope. Instead, historians now believe the Dutch eyeglass maker Johannes Lippershey as its creator. Galileo was, however, probably the first to use the device to study the heavens.

Black Holes are so dense, and produce such intense gravity, that even light can not escape. Theoretical physicists predict that there are situations under which light can escape (which is

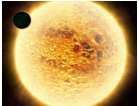
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called Hawking radiation).

Light from distant stars and galaxies takes so long to reach us, that we are actually seeing objects as they appeared hundreds, thousands or even millions of years ago. So, as we look up at the sky, we are really looking back in time.



The Crab Nebula was produced by a supernova explosion in 1054 A.D. The Chinese and Arab astronomers at the time noted that the explosion was so bright, that it was visible during the day, and lit up the night sky for months.

Shooting stars are usually just tiny dust particles falling through our atmosphere. Comets sometimes pass through Earth's orbit, leaving trails of dust behind. Then as Earth plows through the dust in its path, the particles heat up, creating the streaks in the night sky .

Even though Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun, temperatures can reach -280 degrees F. Why? Since Mercury has almost no atmosphere, there is nothing to trap heat near the surface. So, the dark side of Mercury (the side facing away from the Sun) is very cold.

Venus is considerably hotter than Mercury, even though it is further away from the Sun. The thickness of Venus' atmosphere traps heat near the surface of the planet.

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- Due to its size, Pluto's moon Charon is also considered to be a double dwarf planet (two planets orbiting each other), rather than a moon orbiting its planet.
- It is estimated that the mineral wealth of the asteroids between Mars and Jupiter is worth about £60,000,000 for every man, woman and child on Earth!

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- Just 20 seconds worth of fuel remained when Apollo 11's lunar module landed on the moon.
- A neutron star has such density that a teaspoonful of its matter would weigh more than all the people on Earth.
- Driving at 75 miles (121 km) per hour, it would take 258 days to drive around one of Saturn's rings.
- The energy in the sunlight we see today started out in the core of the Sun 30,000 years ago.
- The largest known star Canis Majoris is so big that if our Sun were a ball 117cm (46in) wide, Canis Majoris would be 2.25 kilometres (1.3 miles) wide.
- The deepest surface point on Mars is Hellas, about 3 km deep.
- Halley's Comet was last seen in the inner Solar System in 1986 and will not be visible again from Earth until around 2061.
- The Sun contains over 99.8 percent of the total material (mass) in our solar system, while Jupiter contains most of the rest.
- The density of Saturn is so low that if you were to put it in a giant glass of water it would float.
- December 21st 1968, was the first time that humans really left Earth when Apollo 8 became the first manned space vehicle to leave Earth orbit and to orbit the Moon.
- If you tried to count all the known stars in a galaxy at a rate of one every second it would take around 3,000 years to count them all.
- Every year the moon moves about 3.8cm further away from the Earth.
- One pinhead of the sun's energy is enough to kill a person at a distance of 160 kilometres.
- With powerful telescopes, astronomers can see galaxies 2 billion light years away. This means we see them as they were when the only life forms in Earth were bacteria.
- A person who weighs 100kg on earth would only weigh 38kg on the surface of Mars because of lower gravity there.
- The only planet that spins backwards relative to the others is Venus.
- The very furthest galaxies in the universe are speeding away from us at more than 90% of the speed of light.
- When Sir William Herschel discovered Uranus in 1781, he named it Georgium Sidus (George's Star) after his patron King George III.
- The Mars Curiosity Rover is 10 feet long, 9 feet wide and 7 feet tall and will work on the surface of Mars for one Martian year ~ 23 Earth months.
- Every one minute you are about 19 thousand kilometres away from where you were because both our planet and galaxy are travelling through space.