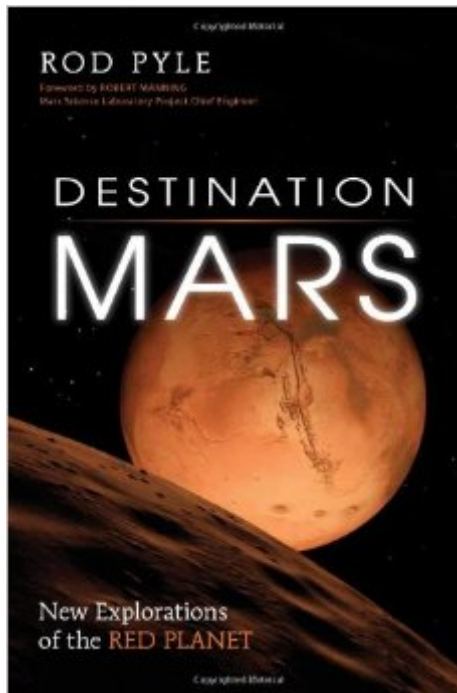


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Destination Mars: New Explorations Of The Red Planet



Synopsis

In the next decade, NASA, by itself and in collaboration with the European Space Agency, is planning a minimum of four separate missions to Mars. Clearly, exciting times are ahead for Mars exploration. This is an insider's look into the amazing projects now being developed here and abroad to visit the legendary red planet. Drawing on his contacts at NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the author provides stunning insights into the history of Mars exploration and the difficulties and dangers of traveling there. After an entertaining survey of the human fascination with Mars over the centuries, the author offers an introduction to the geography, geology, and water processes of the planet. He then briefly describes the many successful missions by NASA and others to that distant world. But failure and frustration also get their due. As the author makes clear, going to Mars is not, and never will be, easy. Later in the book, he describes in detail what each upcoming mission will involve. In the second half of the book, he offers the reader a glimpse inside the world of Earth-based "Mars analogs," places on Earth where scientists are conducting research in hostile environments that are eerily "Martian." Finally, he constructs a probable scenario of a crewed expedition to Mars, so that readers can see how earlier robotic missions and human Earth simulations will fit together. All this is punctuated by numerous firsthand interviews with some of the finest Mars explorers of our day, including Stephen Squyres (Mars Exploration Rover), Bruce Murray (former director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory), and Peter Smith (chief of the Mars Phoenix Lander and the upcoming OSIRIS-REx missions). These stellar individuals give us an insider's view of the difficulties and rewards of roaming the red planet. The author's infectious enthusiasm and firsthand knowledge of the international space industry combine to make a uniquely appealing and accessible book about Mars.

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Customer Reviews

Rod Pyle has written the best summary about the history of our exploration of the Red Planet. Pyle starts with the fanciful pre-Space Age beliefs about Mars especially those like Percival Lowell who proposed that Mars was covered with intelligently engineered canals. Then we find out the many difficulties the US and former Soviet Union has had in successfully orbiting and landing probes on Mars. There seems to be a 'Great Galactic Ghoul' that has caused the failure of many attempts to explore the secrets of Mars including the infamous back-to-back failures of our Mars Climate Orbiter and the Mars Polar Lander in the late 90's. But Pyle's book isn't about the failures of our missions to Mars but rather the amazing successes we have had in ferreting out the secrets that had been hidden for so long. Pyle writes in very accessible language for the layman while still providing commentary from several of the scientists who participated in these missions for their unique perspective. The biggest successes in exploring Mars have come over the past decade with the prolific data gathered by the Energizer Bunny rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, the Mars Global Surveyor, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the Phoenix Lander. We now know that there is water on Mars which means there could be life. Pyle discusses the Mars Science Laboratory which is on its way to Mars as I write this scheduled to land in August. It is the Cadillac of landers with a host of sophisticated tools on board to search for the elusive evidence of life. It will be a risky landing and let's hope it is successful because it can really advance our understanding of Mars' history and present. It would be a huge discovery to finally prove that life exists (or did exist) on Mars or to prove that life has not existed on Mars in Gale Crater.

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