

? DID YOU KNOW

- ★ Venus, with an average temperature of 482C, is the hottest planet.
- ★ Neptune, with an average temperature of -201C, is the coldest planet.
- ★ Jupiter has more moons than any planet. It has 63.
- ★ Mercury and Venus are the two planets without any moons.
- ★ Jupiter has a red spot which is actually a huge raging storm.
- ★ Of all the planets, Mercury takes the shortest time to revolve around the sun. It takes only 88 (Earth) days.
- ★ Jupiter has the shortest day. It lasts only 9.9 (Earth) hours.

Distance from sun
778.3 million km

Diameter at equator
142,900 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
9.9 hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
11.86 Earth years

Distance from sun
1.427 million km

Diameter at equator
120,536 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
10.7 hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
29.45 Earth years

Distance from sun
4.5 billion km

Diameter at equator
50,538 km

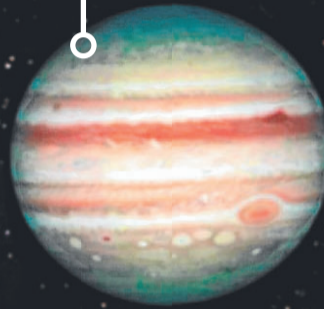
Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
16 hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
164.8 Earth years

NEPTUNE



JUPITER



SATURN



URANUS



Distance from sun
149.6 million km

Diameter at equator
12,756 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
23.93 Earth hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
365.26 Earth days

EARTH



Distance from sun
227.9 million km

Diameter at equator
6794 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
24.6 Earth hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
1.88 years

MARS



Distance from sun
2.87 billion km

Diameter at equator
51,118 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
17.2 hours

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
84 Earth years

URANUS

Distance from sun
57.9 million km

Diameter at equator
4879 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
58.6 Earth days

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
88 Earth days

MERCURY



VENUS



Distance from sun
108.2 million km

Diameter at equator
12,104 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
243 Earth days

Length of year
(time taken to orbit the Sun)
225 Earth days

VENUS

Distance from Earth
149.6 million km

Mean radius
695,508 km

Length of a day
(time for one rotation about axis)
25.38 Earth days

Temperature
5504c

Age
4.6 billion years

SUN

THE YEAR OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Ancient stargazers saw objects in the night sky they dubbed planets, or wanderers, and named them after Roman gods.

Mercury was named after the messenger of the gods, Venus after the goddess of love; Mars had a moniker meaning god of war, while Jupiter was king of the gods and Saturn was Jupiter's father and the god of agriculture.

Early astronomers noted the blazing tails that are comets and meteors, looking like falling stars.

It was not until modern times, and the invention of the telescope, that three more planets were identified.

These were Uranus (1781), Neptune (1846) and Pluto (1930), but Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet in 2006.

Terrestrial planets are those nearest to the sun - Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars - all of which have solid surfaces. Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune are gas planets.

Earth, the largest of the terrestrial planets, is also an ocean planet. We think it is unique as it's the only one we know of with the right mix of water and chemicals to support life, and plenty of it.

But Earth, along with the other planets in our solar system, orbits around a star,

the Sun, which is a fiery ball of glowing gases. The Sun is not only a provider of energy for our planet, but its importance extends way beyond Neptune. Were it not for the intense heat, light and energy the Sun radiates, there would not be life on Earth.

It is interesting to note there are billions of Sun-like stars in the Milky Way galaxy.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the US has christened this year, through to December 2013, the Year of the Solar System. It's part of NASA's 50th birthday celebrations and it offers lots of resources for schools to use.