

NASA's Curiosity rover says Mars missing most of its atmosphere

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Curiosity rover has found out that Mars is missing most of its atmosphere. Much to the dismay of those who were planning to shift bag and baggage to the 'Red Planet' following the discovery of an atmosphere suitable to life, the recent findings have established that Mars has lost much of its original atmosphere, thereby rendering it inhospitable.

However, on the positive side, in the discovery that was made by NASA's Mars rover Curiosity, it has been indicate that even though the planet has lost much of the original atmosphere, what has been left is quite

active. The findings were reported by the Rover's team members during the European Geosciences Union 2013 General Assembly, held at Vienna.

According to researchers, based on the findings it has been established that the original atmosphere was lost as result of a process wherein the gas escaped from the top of the atmosphere.



The discovery was made using Curiosity's Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument. In the process a sample of selected gases was concentrated and analyzed. The results had provided with the most precise measurements ever made of isotopes of argon in the Martian atmosphere. "We found arguably the clearest and most robust signature of atmospheric loss on Mars," said Sushil Atreya, a SAM co-investigator at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

During the process it was also revealed that Martian atmosphere has about four times as much of a lighter stable isotope (argon-36) compared to a heavier one (argon-38), thus removing the previous uncertainty about the ratio in the Martian atmosphere from 1976 measurements from NASA's Viking project .

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It is noteworthy that Curiosity measures several variables in the present Martian atmosphere by using the Rover Environmental Monitoring Station (REMS). Though the daily air temperature has climbed steadily since the measurements began eight months the humidity has differed significantly at different places along the rover's route. These are the first systematic measurements of humidity on Mars.

It is also important to note that while trails of dust devils were not visible Gale Crater, the REMS sensors detected many whirlwind patterns during the first hundred Martian days of the mission.

"A whirlwind is a very quick event that happens in a few seconds and should be verified by a combination of pressure, temperature and wind oscillations and, in some cases, a decrease in ultraviolet radiation," said REMS Principal Investigator Javier Gómez-Elvira of the Centro de Astrobiología, Madrid.


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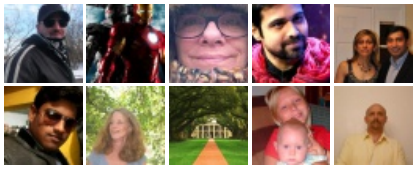


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