



Mercury

- As well as being the planet closest to the sun, Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system. It's diameter is 4 880 km and its orbit distance is 57 900 000 km.
- The ancient Romans referred to this planet as Mercury and the Greeks referred to it as Hermes. Hermes is known as the

messenger of the Gods because it moves quickly across the sky.

- Mercury's gravity is 38% that on Earth. A 40kg person would weigh about 15kg on Mercury.
- Mercury is -183 degrees Celsius on the night side and 430 degrees Celsius on the daytime side.
- Mercury's year is about 88 earth days and one day is about 59 earth days.
- This planet was visited by one spacecraft. Mariner 10 flew by twice, once in 1974 and once in 1975. Less than half the surface has been mapped.
- Mercury has no significant atmosphere, except for thin layer of atoms blasted off the surface by the solar wind. These are constantly escaping into space, but are replenished by the intense solar wind which is not effected much by its weak magnetic field (1% earth's).
- It has an ancient surface, much like our moon, consisting of a heavily cratered terrain.
- Since Mercury lies between the earth and the sun, it exhibits phases like our moon.
- Messenger mission launched on August 3, 2004 will reach Mercury in 2008.