

Rosetta spacecraft meets asteroid Steins

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On its way to comet 67/P Churyumov-Gerasimenko, Rosetta is targeting two asteroids for study: (2867) Steins, on 5 September 2008, and (21) Lutetia on 10 June 2010. Credits: ESA TV

ESA's Rosetta spacecraft will make a historic encounter with asteroid (2867) Steins on 5 September 2008.

First images and results will be available during a press conference which will be held at ESOC the following day, Saturday 6 September at 12:00 CEST.

Steins is Rosetta's first nominal scientific target. The spacecraft will rendezvous with the asteroid in the course of its first incursion into the asteroid belt located between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter, while on its way to comet 67/P Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

The study of asteroids is extremely important as they represent a sample of Solar System material at different stages of evolution – key to understanding the origin of our own planet and of our planetary neighbourhood.

The closest approach to Steins is due to take place on 5 September at 20:58 CEST (Central European Summer Time), from a distance of 800 km, during which the spacecraft will not be communicating with Earth.

First ground contact with the spacecraft and announcement of successful fly-by will take place at 22:23 CEST. The first data and images collected by Rosetta will be sent to Earth throughout the night of 5 to 6 September and will undergo preliminary processing in the morning of 6 September.

Provided by ESA

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