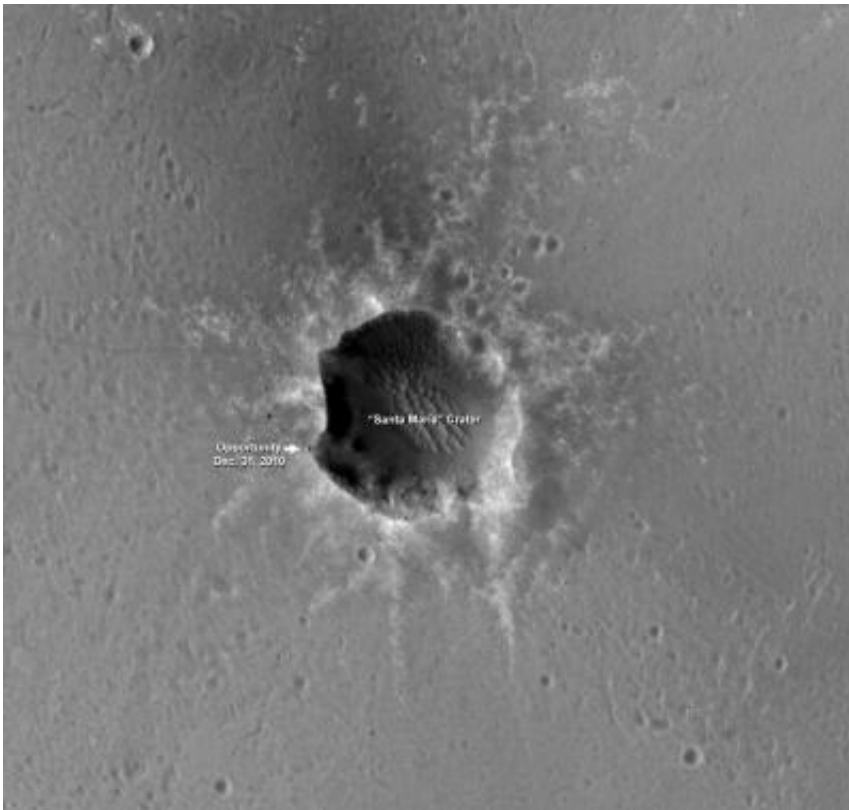


Opportunity rover will spend 7th birthday at stadium-size crater

January 4 2011



The High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) camera on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter acquired this image of the Opportunity rover on the southwest rim of "Santa Maria" crater on New Year's Eve 2010, or Martian day (sol) 2466 of the rover's work on Mars. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Univ. of Arizona

(PhysOrg.com) -- The High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment

(HiRISE) camera on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter captured a Dec. 31, 2010, view of the Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity on the southwestern rim of a football-field-size crater called "Santa Maria."

Opportunity arrived at the western edge of Santa Maria crater in mid-December and will spend about two months investigating rocks there. That investigation will take Opportunity into the beginning of its eighth year on Mars. Opportunity landed in the Meridiani Planum region of Mars on Jan. 25, 2004, Universal Time (Jan. 24, Pacific Time) for a mission originally planned to last for three months.

The new image is online at [nasa.gov/mission_pages/mer/multimedia/gallery/pia13754-anno.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/mer/multimedia/gallery/pia13754-anno.html) target="_blank">[www.nasa.gov/mission_ ... y/pia13754-anno.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/mer/multimedia/gallery/pia13754-anno.html) .

Opportunity and its twin, Spirit, which passed its seventh anniversary on Mars this week, both have made important discoveries about wet environments on ancient [Mars](#) that may have been favorable for supporting microbial life.

Provided by JPL/NASA

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