

China Mars probe set for November launch

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China's Mars explorer, Yinghuo-1, marks the country's first attempt at deep space exploration after sending a probe to the moon, the state-run China Daily reported, citing comments from a China Academy of Space Technology official.

The 110-kilogram (240-pound) micro-satellite was originally due to blast off in October 2009 with Russia's "Phobos Explorer" from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan but the launch was postponed, according to previous reports.

The orbiter is due to probe the Martian [space environment](#) with a special focus on what happened to the water that appears to have once been abundant on the planet's surface, previous reports said.

China is aiming to build a [space exploration](#) programme on par with those of the United States and Russia.

It currently has a probe -- the Chang'e 2 -- orbiting the moon and carrying out various tests in preparation for the expected 2013 launch of the Chang'e-3, which it hopes will be its first unmanned [lunar landing](#).

It became the world's third nation to put a man in space independently -- after the Soviet Union and the United States -- when Yang Liwei piloted the one-man Shenzhou-5 [space mission](#) in 2003.

China's Wang Yue is currently participating in a simulation of a mission to Mars in Russia, where astronauts have spent eight months in a [space capsule](#) cut off from the world.

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