Image: A whole new world for Curiosity

August 14 2012

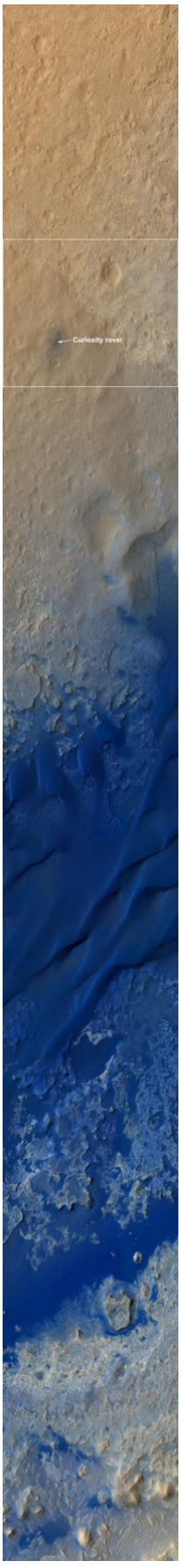

Curiosity rover

Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/University of Arizona

(Phys.org) -- This color-enhanced view -- taken by the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter as the satellite flew overhead -- shows the terrain around the rover's landing site within Gale Crater on Mars. Colors were enhanced to bring out subtle differences, showing that the landing region is not as colorful as regions to the south, closer to Mount Sharp, where Curiosity will eventually explore. In reality, the blue colors are more gray.

The rover itself is seen as the circular object, with the blast pattern from its descent stage seen as relatively blue colors.

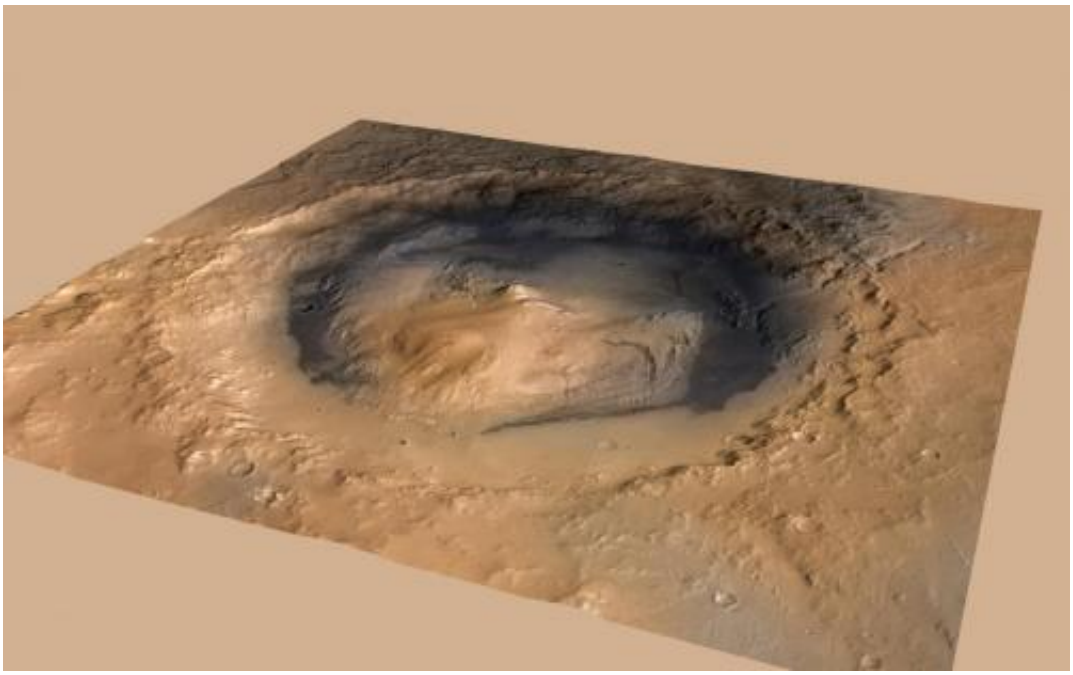
The dark dune fields lying between the rover and Mount Sharp can be seen in the lower portion of the picture. Mount Sharp is out of view, below the image frame. The rover is about 980 feet (300 meters) from the bottom of the picture.

This image was acquired six days after Curiosity landed at an angle of 30 degrees from straight down, looking west. Another image looking more directly down will be acquired in five days, completing a stereo pair along with this image.

The scale of this image cutout is about 24 inches (62 centimeter) per pixel.

HiRISE is one of six instruments on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. The University of Arizona, Tucson, operates the orbiter's

HiRISE camera, which was built by Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp., Boulder, Colo. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, manages the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter Project for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, Washington. Lockheed Martin Space Systems, Denver, built the spacecraft.



NASA's Curiosity rover landed in the Martian crater known as Gale Crater, which is approximately the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. A green dot shows where the rover landed, well within its targeted landing ellipse, outlined in blue. This oblique view of Gale, and Mount Sharp in the center, is derived from a combination of elevation and imaging data from three Mars orbiters. The view is looking toward the southeast. Mount Sharp rises about 3.4 miles (5.5 kilometers) above the floor of Gale Crater. The image combines elevation data from the High Resolution Stereo Camera on the European Space Agency's Mars Express orbiter, image data from the Context Camera on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, and color information from Viking Orbiter imagery. There is no vertical exaggeration in the image. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/ESA/DLR/FU Berlin/MSSS

Provided by NASA