

One year after launch, Curiosity rover busy on Mars

November 27 2012, by Guy Webster



This panorama is a mosaic of images taken by the Mast Camera (Mastcam) on the NASA Mars rover Curiosity while the rover was working at a site called "Rocknest" in October and November 2012. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Malin Space Science Systems

(Phys.org)—The NASA Mars rover Curiosity began its flight to Mars on Nov. 26, 2011, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., tucked

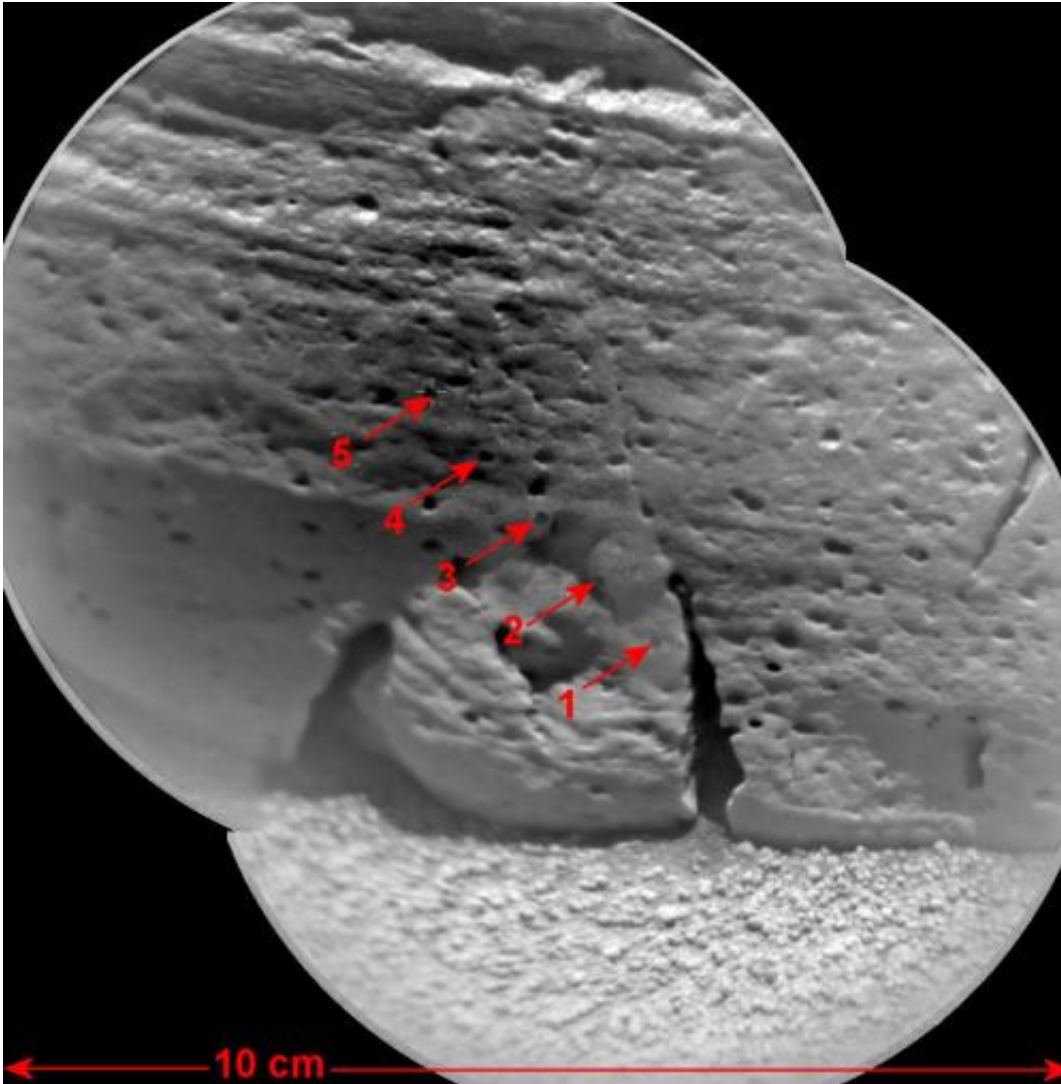
inside the Mars Science Laboratory spacecraft. One year after launch and 16 weeks since its dramatic landing on target inside Gale Crater, Curiosity has returned more than 23,000 raw images, driven 1,696 feet (517 meters) and begun helping researchers better understand the area's environmental history.

The car-size rover is at a site called "Point Lake" overlooking lower ground to the east, where the rover team intends to find a target for first use of Curiosity's rock-sampling drill.



This view of a Martian rock called "Rocknest 3" combines four images taken by the right-eye camera of the Mast Camera (Mastcam) instrument, which has a telephoto, 100-millimeter-focal-length lens. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Malin Space Science Systems

During a two-year prime mission, researchers are using Curiosity's [10 science instruments](#) to assess whether the study area in Gale Crater ever has offered environmental conditions favorable for microbial life.



This view of a rock called "Rocknest 3" combines two images taken by the Chemistry and Camera (ChemCam) instrument on the NASA Mars rover Curiosity and indicates five spots where ChemCam had hit the rock with laser pulses to check its composition. It covers an area 3.9 inches (10 centimeters) across. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/LANL/CNES/IRAP

More information: More information about Curiosity is online at www.nasa.gov/msl and mars.jpl.nasa.gov/msl/

Provided by JPL/NASA

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