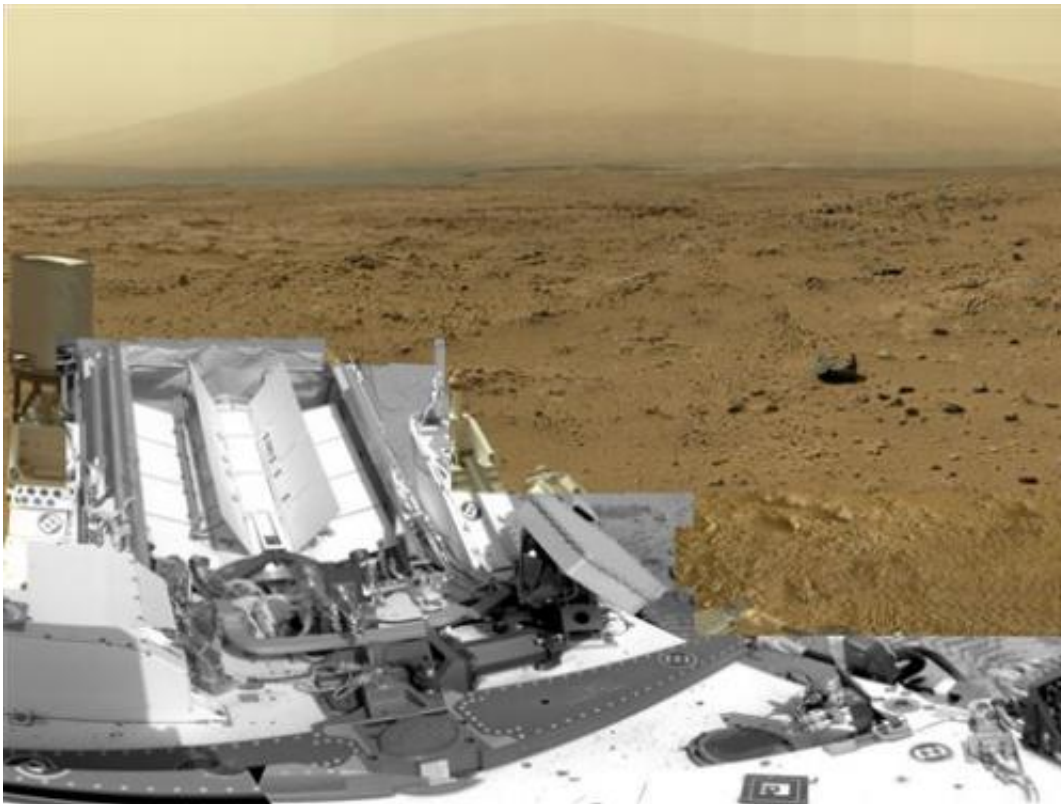


NASA Mars rover Curiosity begins delayed road trip

July 8 2013



This photo released by NASA shows a photo stitched together from nearly 900 images taken by the NASA rover Curiosity showing a section of Gale Crater near the Martian equator. Nearly a year after landing, Curiosity is finally starting the drive to a mountain in search of the chemical building blocks of life. (AP Photo/NASA)

It took longer than expected, but NASA's Curiosity rover is finally

heading toward a Martian mountain.

The nuclear-powered, six-wheel rover drove a total of 190 feet since July Fourth, leaving the spot where it spent the past seven months examining rocks and dirt.

Curiosity landed last August in Gale Crater near Mars' [equator](#) and has already found an environment that scientists say contains all the right ingredients for [microbes](#) to survive.

The delay in heading to Mount Sharp was mostly due to unexpected discoveries. As pleased as scientists are with the progress so far, they're itching to study the layers of rock at the base of the mountain.

The trek is expected to last nine months to a year with several stops along the way.

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