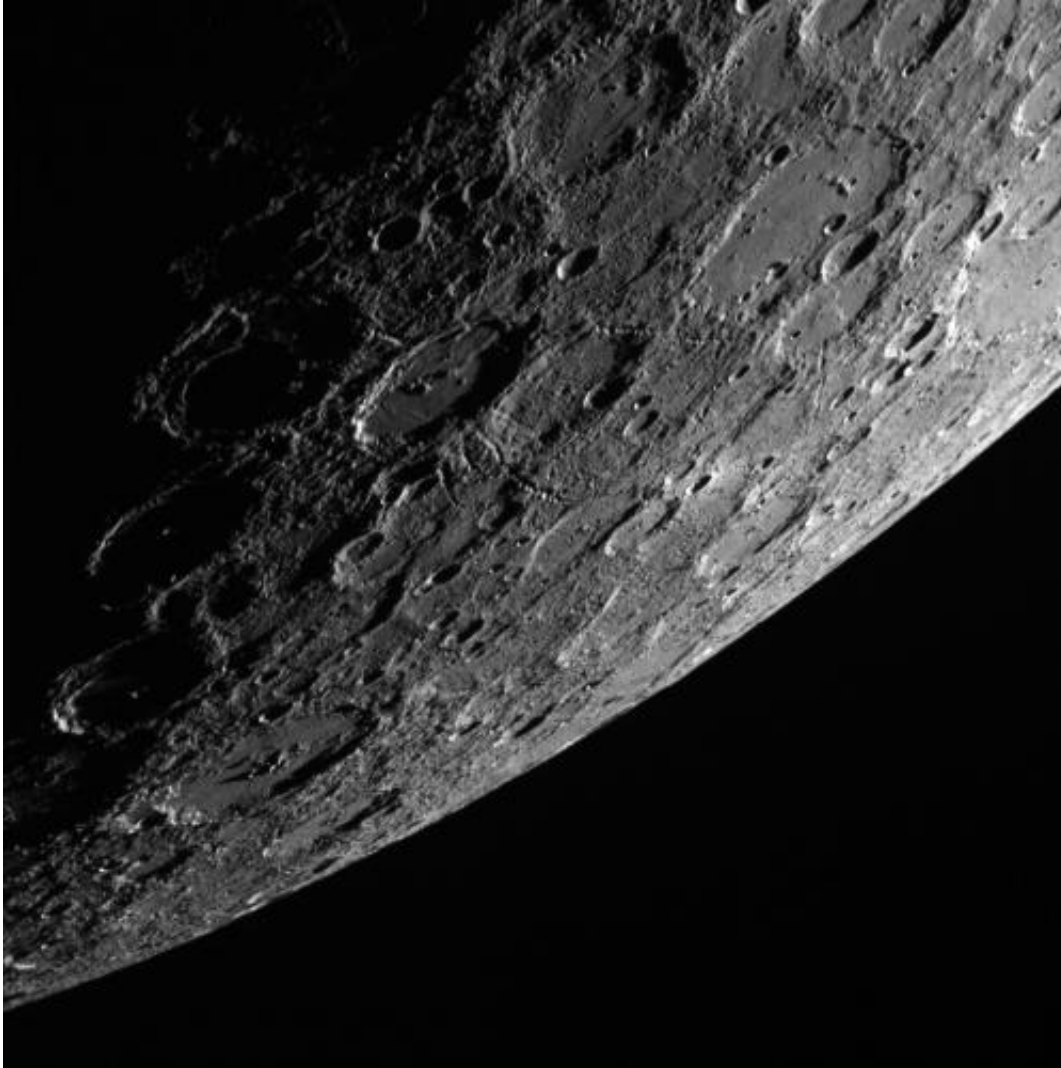


# Image: Sunlit side of the planet Mercury

October 29 2013

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Credit: NASA/Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory/Carnegie Institution of Washington

Another day, another beautiful view of Mercury's horizon. In this scene, which was acquired looking from the shadows toward the sunlit side of the planet, a 120-km (75 mi.) impact crater stands out near the center. Emanating from this unnamed crater are striking chains of secondary craters, which gouged linear tracks radially away from the crater. While this crater is not especially fresh (its rays have faded into the background), it does appear to have more prominent secondary crater chains than many of its peers.

This image was acquired on Oct. 2, 2013 by the Wide Angle Camera (WAC) of the Mercury Dual Imaging System (MDIS) aboard NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft, as part of the MDIS's limb imaging campaign. Once per week, MDIS captures images of Mercury's limb, with an emphasis on imaging the southern hemisphere limb. These limb images provide information about Mercury's shape and complement measurements of topography made by the Mercury Laser Altimeter (MLA) of Mercury's northern hemisphere.

The MESSENGER spacecraft is the first ever to orbit the planet Mercury, and the spacecraft's seven scientific instruments and radio science investigation are unraveling the history and evolution of the solar system's innermost planet. During the first two years of orbital operations, MESSENGER acquired over 150,000 images and extensive other data sets. MESSENGER is capable of continuing orbital operations until early 2015.

Provided by NASA

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