

Image: Kaleidoscopic view of Mars

July 22 2014, by Nancy Atkinson



months of Mars observations in a single image, from October 2013 ending end of June 2014. Credit: Leo Aerts.

Astrophotographer Leo Aerts from Belgium took advantage of the recent opposition of Mars and captured the Red Planet both "coming and going" in this montage of images taken from October 2013 to June of 2014. Mars reached opposition in April of this year, meaning it was closest to Earth, allowing for the brightest and best viewing.

Leo even shows the changing locations in the sky where Mars appeared across the months, allowing also for the apparent retrograde motion through Virgo during the months on either side of opposition.

Opposition of Mars (or any planet) means that planet and the Sun are on directly opposite sides of Earth. From our perspective on a spinning Earth, the other planet rises in the east just as the Sun sets in the west. Then, after staying up in the sky the entire night, the other planet sets in the west just as the Sun rises in the east.

Mars' opposition happens about every 26 months. Opposition time is also a good time to send spacecraft to Mars, since our two [planets](#) are the closest, meaning less fuel (and time) will be needed to reach the planet. Hence, we've got two missions on their way to the Red Planet: MAVEN will arrive at Mars on September 21, 2014, and India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) will get there on September 24.

This year's opposition was pretty close, but we're currently on an improving trend: the next opposition in 2016 Mars will look even bigger and brighter and during the 2018 [opposition](#), Mars will nearly be as close as it was in 2003.

Source: [Universe Today](#)

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