

Dawn glimpses Ceres' north pole

April 19 2015



This animation shows the north pole of dwarf planet Ceres as seen by the Dawn spacecraft on April 10, 2015. Dawn was at a distance of 21,000 miles (33,000 kilometers) when its framing camera took these images. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/UCLA/MPS/DLR/IDA

After spending more than a month in orbit on the dark side of dwarf planet Ceres, NASA's Dawn spacecraft has captured several views of the sunlit north pole of this intriguing world. These images were taken on April 10 from a distance of 21,000 miles (33,000 kilometers), and they

represent the highest-resolution views of Ceres to date.

Subsequent images of Ceres will show surface features at increasingly better resolution.

Dawn arrived at Ceres on March 6, marking the first time a spacecraft has orbited a [dwarf planet](#). Previously, the spacecraft explored giant asteroid Vesta for 14 months from 2011 to 2012. Dawn has the distinction of being the only spacecraft to orbit two extraterrestrial targets.

Ceres, with an average diameter of about 590 miles (950 kilometers), is the largest body in the [main asteroid belt](#) between Mars and Jupiter. Dawn has been using its ion propulsion system to maneuver to its first science orbit at Ceres, which it will reach on April 23. The spacecraft will remain at a distance of 8,400 miles (13,500 kilometers) from the dwarf planet until May 9. Afterward, it will make its way to lower orbits.

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