

Full-circle vista from NASA Mars rover Curiosity shows 'Murray Buttes'

August 22 2016



This 360-degree panorama was acquired by the Mast Camera (Mastcam) on NASA's Curiosity Mars rover as the rover neared features called "Murray Buttes" on lower Mount Sharp. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS

Eroded mesas and buttes reminiscent of the U.S. Southwest shape part of the horizon in the latest 360-degree color panorama from NASA's Curiosity Mars rover.

The [rover](#) used its Mast Camera (Mastcam) to capture dozens of component images of this scene on Aug. 5, 2016, four years after Curiosity's landing inside Gale Crater.

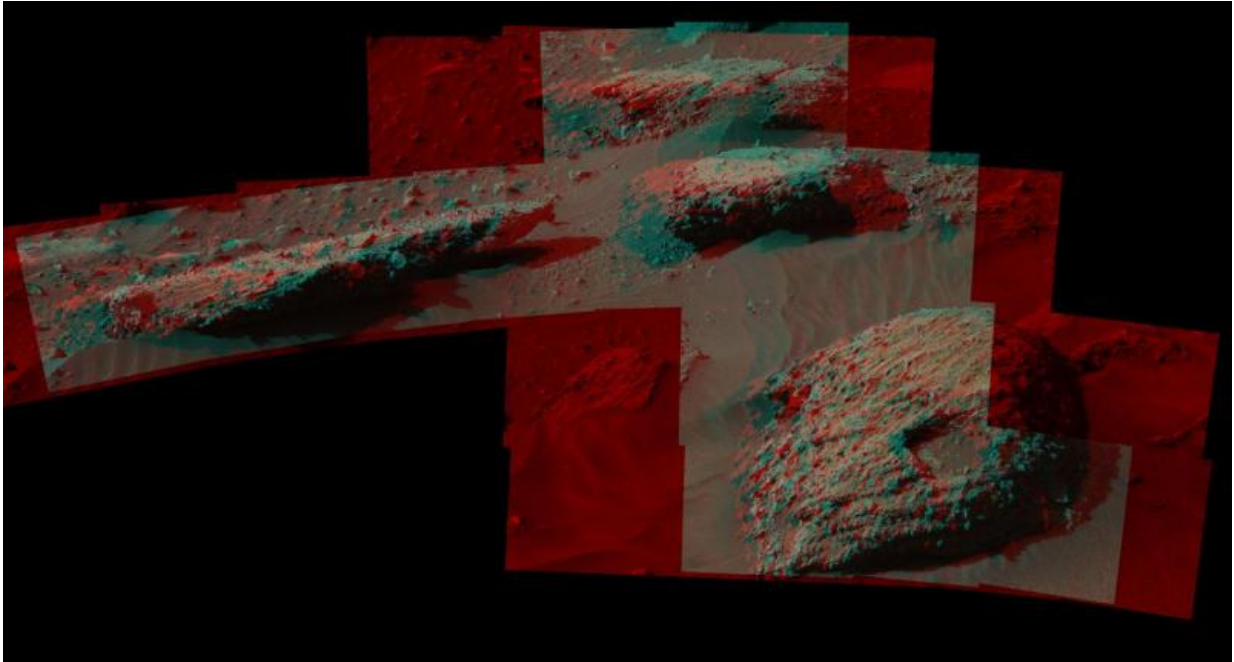
The visual drama of Murray Buttes along Curiosity's planned route up lower Mount Sharp was [anticipated](#) when the site was informally named nearly three years ago to honor Caltech planetary scientist Bruce Murray

(1931-2013), a former director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California. JPL manages the Curiosity mission for NASA.

The buttes and mesas are capped with rock that is relatively resistant to wind erosion. This helps preserve these monumental remnants of a layer that formerly more fully covered the underlying layer that the rover is now driving on.

Early in its mission on Mars, Curiosity accomplished its main goal when it found and examined an ancient habitable environment. In an extended mission, the rover is examining successively younger layers as it climbs the lower part of Mount Sharp. A key goal is to learn how freshwater lake conditions, which would have been favorable for microbes billions of years ago if Mars has ever had life, evolved into harsher, arid conditions much less suited to supporting life. The mission is also monitoring the modern environment of Mars.

These findings have been addressing high-priority goals for planetary science and further aid NASA's preparations for a human [mission](#) to the Red Planet.



This stereo scene from the Mast Camera (Mastcam) on NASA's Curiosity Mars Rover shows boulders composed, in part, of pebble-size (0.2 to 2.6 inches, or 0.5 to 6.5 centimeters across) and larger rock fragments. The size and shape of the fragments provide clues to the origins of these boulders. This image is an anaglyph that appears three dimensional when viewed through red-blue glasses with the red lens on the left. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS

More information: For more information about Curiosity, visit www.nasa.gov/msl

Provided by Jet Propulsion Laboratory

Citation: Full-circle vista from NASA Mars rover Curiosity shows 'Murray Buttes' (2016, August 22) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2016-08-full-circle-vista-nasa-mars-rover.html>

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