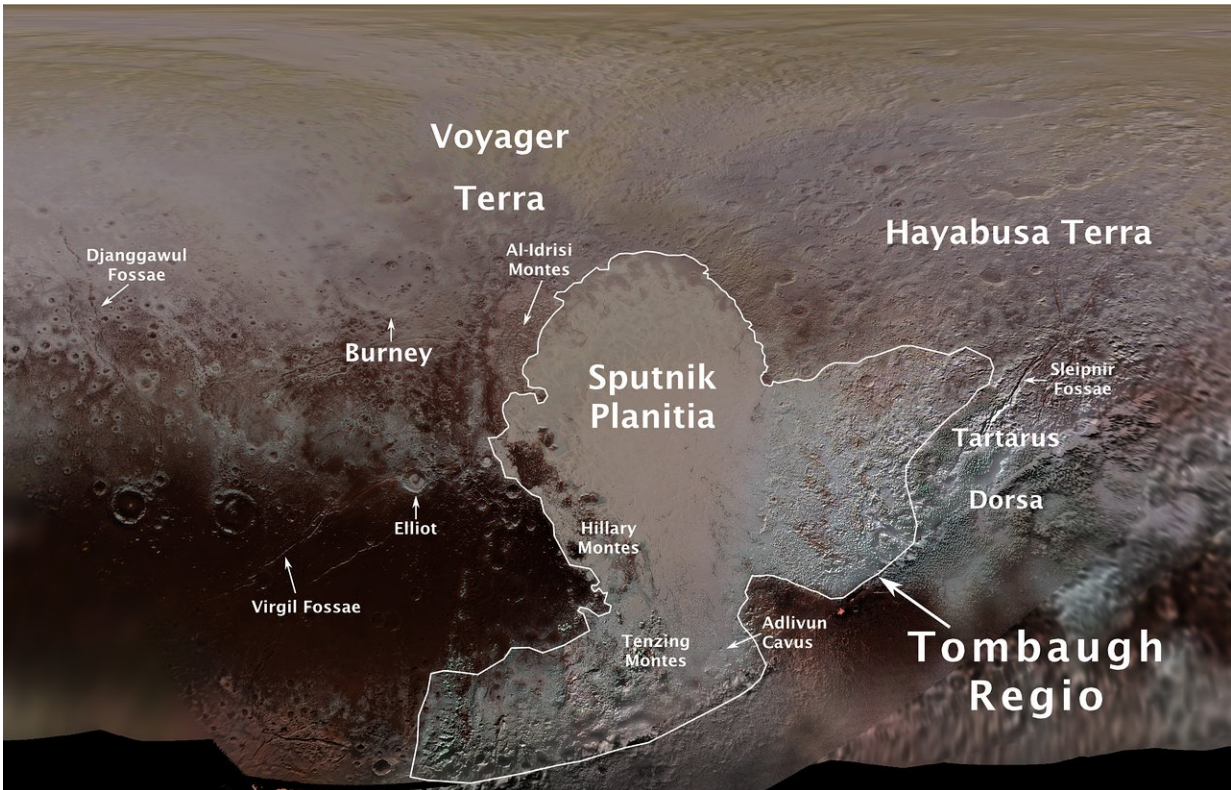


# Pluto features given first official names

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Pluto's first official surface-feature names are marked on this map, compiled from images and data gathered by NASA's New Horizons spacecraft during its flight through the Pluto system in 2015. Credit: NASA/JHUAPL/SwRI/Ross Beyer

The Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature of the International Astronomical Union has officially approved the naming of 14 features on the surface of Pluto. These are the first geological

features on the planet to be named following the close flyby by the New Horizons spacecraft in July 2015.

The IAU has assigned names to fourteen [geological features](#) on the surface of Pluto. The names pay homage to the underworld mythology, pioneering space missions, historic pioneers who crossed [new horizons](#) in exploration, and scientists and engineers associated with Pluto and the Kuiper Belt. This is the first set of official names of surface features on Pluto to be approved by the IAU, the internationally recognised authority for naming celestial bodies and their surface features.

NASA's New Horizons team proposed the names to the IAU following the first reconnaissance of Pluto and its moons by the New Horizons spacecraft. Some of the names were suggested by members of the public during the [Our Pluto](#) campaign, which was launched as a partnership between the IAU, the New Horizons project and the SETI Institute. Other names had been used informally by the New Horizons science team to describe the many regions, mountain ranges, plains, valleys and craters discovered during the first close-up look at the surfaces of Pluto and its largest moon, Charon.

"We're very excited to approve names recognising people of significance to Pluto and the pursuit of exploration as well as the mythology of the underworld. These names highlight the importance of pushing to the frontiers of discovery," said Rita Schulz, chair of the IAU Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature. "We appreciate the contribution of the general public in the form of their their naming suggestions and the New Horizons team for proposing these names to us."

More names are expected to be proposed to the IAU, both for Pluto and for its moons. "The approved designations honour many people and space missions who paved the way for the historic exploration of Pluto

and the Kuiper Belt, the most distant worlds ever explored," said Alan Stern, New Horizons Principal Investigator from the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) in Boulder, Colorado.

The approved Pluto surface feature names are listed below.

**Tombaugh Regio** honours Clyde Tombaugh (1906-1997), the U.S. astronomer who discovered Pluto in 1930 from Lowell Observatory in Arizona.

**Burney crater** honors Venetia Burney (1918-2009), who as an 11-year-old schoolgirl suggested the name "Pluto" for Clyde Tombaugh's newly discovered planet. Later in life she taught mathematics and economics.

**Sputnik Planitia** is a large plain named after Sputnik 1, the first space satellite, launched by the Soviet Union in 1957.

**Tenzing Montes** and **Hillary Montes** are mountain ranges honouring Tenzing Norgay (1914-1986) and Sir Edmund Hillary (1919-2008), the Indian/Nepali Sherpa and New Zealand mountaineer who were the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest and return safely.

**Al-Idrisi Montes** honours Ash-Sharif al-Idrisi (1100-1165/66), a noted Arab mapmaker and geographer whose landmark work of medieval geography is sometimes translated as "The Pleasure of Him Who Longs to Cross the Horizons."

**Djanggal Fossae** defines a network of long, narrow depressions named for the Djanggalwuls, three ancestral beings in indigenous Australian mythology who travelled between the island of the dead and Australia, creating the landscape and filling it with vegetation.

**Sleipnir Fossa** is named for the powerful, eight-legged horse of Norse

mythology that carried the god Odin into the underworld.

**Virgil Fossae** honors Virgil, one of the greatest Roman poets and Dante's fictional guide through hell and purgatory in the Divine Comedy.

**Adlivun Cavus** is a deep depression named for Adlivun, the underworld in Inuit mythology.

**Hayabusa Terra** is a large land mass saluting the Japanese spacecraft and mission (2003-2010) that returned the first asteroid sample.

**Voyager Terra** honours the pair of NASA spacecraft, launched in 1977, that performed the first "grand tour" of all four giant planets. The Voyager spacecraft are now probing the boundary between the Sun and interstellar space.

**Tartarus Dorsa** is a ridge named for Tartarus, the deepest, darkest pit of the underworld in Greek mythology.

**Elliot crater** recognises James Elliot (1943-2011), an MIT researcher who pioneered the use of stellar occultations to study the Solar System—leading to discoveries such as the rings of Uranus and the first detection of Pluto's thin atmosphere.

Provided by International Astronomical Union

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