New York's Times Square to broadcast Mars landing

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A portion of the west rim of Endeavour Crater sweeps southward in this image from NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity. The highly anticipated landing of NASA's sophisticated $2.5 billion rover on Mars will be broadcast on a large screen in New York City's Times Square, NASA said on Tuesday.

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The touchdown of the Curiosity rover, equipped with a sophisticated roving toolkit for analyzing the terrain for signs that microbial life once existed, is scheduled for August 6 at 1:31 am Eastern time (0531 GMT).

A rocket-powered sky crane aims to lower the car-sized vehicle on to the

surface of the red planet so it can embark on a two-year science mission.

Viewers will not be able to see real-time video of the landing -- no one will -- but the live images will show staff at mission control at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California as they await the signal that the rover touched down.

The images will be on the Toshiba Vision screen, located just below the world-famous New Year's Eve ball in Times Square.

"In the city that never sleeps, the historic Times Square will be the place for New Yorkers to participate in this historic landing," said John Grunsfeld, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

"When you think of all the big news events in history, you think of Times Square, and I can think of no better venue to celebrate this news-making event on Mars."

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