

Video: MAVEN set to slide into orbit around Mars

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A NASA mission to Mars led by the University of Colorado Boulder is set to slide into orbit around the red planet this week after a 10-month, 442-million mile chase through the inner solar system.

MAVEN is designed to target the role the loss of [atmospheric gases](#) played in changing the climate there over the eons. Clues on the Martian surface, including features resembling dry lakes and riverbeds suggest Mars once had a dense atmosphere that supported liquid water.

The MAVEN science mission focuses on answering questions about what happened to the water and carbon dioxide present in the Mars system several billion years ago, said Professor Bruce Jakosky, MAVEN principal investigator from CU-Boulder's Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics. These are important questions for understanding the history of Mars, its climate and its potential to support at least microbial life.

The orbit-insertion maneuver will begin with six thruster engines firing to shed some of the velocity from the spacecraft. The thruster engines will ignite and burn for 33 minutes to slow the spacecraft, allowing it to be captured into orbit around Mars.

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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