

Saturn: 10 Need-To-Know Things [by Anastassis-Gr]

If the sun were as tall as a typical front door, the Earth would be the size of a nickel and Saturn would be about as big as a basketball.

Saturn orbits our sun, a star. Saturn is the sixth planet from the sun at a distance of about 1.4 billion km (886 million miles) or 9.5 AU.

One day on Saturn takes 10.7 hours (the time it takes for Saturn to rotate or spin once). Saturn makes a complete orbit around the sun (a year in Saturnian time) in 29 Earth years (10,756 Earth days).

Saturn is a gas-giant planet and therefore does not have a solid surface.

Saturn's atmosphere is made up mostly of hydrogen (H₂) and helium (He).

Saturn has 53 known moons with an additional nine moons awaiting confirmation of their discovery -- that is a total of 62 moons.

Saturn has the most spectacular ring system, which is made up of seven rings with several gaps and divisions between them.

Only a few missions have visited Saturn: Pioneer 11, Voyager 1 and 2 and Cassini-Huygens. Since 2004, Cassini has been exploring Saturn, its moons and rings.

Saturn cannot support life as we know it. However, some of Saturn's moons have conditions that might support life.

Fact: When Galileo Galilei was observing the planet Saturn in the 1600s, he noticed strange objects on each side of the planet and drew in his notes a triple-bodied planet system and then later a planet with arms or handles. These "handles" were in fact the rings of Saturn.

