

Short Review of 'Mysteries of Mars' by FV de Blasio. Scope: Monograph. Level: General.

There are many books about the red planet Mars, reflecting the new knowledge acquired by an ongoing procession of sent and planned space probes from several Earthly space agencies, and the high level of popular, as well as scientific, interest in our planetary neighbour. 2020 will see the deployment of large European and American robotic explorers on the surface and hopefully the (at least partial) resolution of some enduring mysteries. The present book highlights ten of these unanswered questions, ranging from what happened to Mars's magnetic field, and its surface water, to the \$64,000 goal to understand whether life was ever present during the era when the climate was more Earth-like, and if so whether any of it endures in warm, watery niches below the frozen surface. The book's emphasis is mostly on geological phenomena, such as the giant volcanoes and deep rift valleys, and the 'global dichotomy' whereby the terrains in the northern and southern hemispheres have well-defined, fundamental differences. The atmosphere, and biology if any, receive a fairly light touch by comparison. The text is readable and faithful to the science but not overburdened by jargon, with plenty of illustrations, many of them in colour throughout.