

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MARS MADNESS STRIKES ADLER PLANETARIUM BEGINNING AUGUST 28

By late August, Mars will come within 35 million miles of Earth, appearing seven times larger and shining 75 times brighter than in 2002. Although Mars has been almost this close in recent history, this will be its closest proximity to Earth in 60,000 years! Adler Astronomer Dr. Jose Francisco Salgado remarks, "This will be an exciting opportunity for everyone to view the beauty of Mars. Naked eye observers will enjoy the sight of a much brighter Mars while telescope users will be able to see more details on the Martian surface, such as polar ice caps."

Providing onsite expertise offered by astronomers and educators on hand to answer your questions about Mars, the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum will hold special observing events on:

- **Thursday, August 28, 9:00 pm – Midnight**
- **Friday, August 29, 9:00 pm – Midnight**
- **Friday, September 5, 9:00 pm – Midnight**

The Adler's Doane observatory will be open for tours and public viewing all three nights. Telescopes will be set up on the South Lawn (weather permitting) for public viewing. Due to Mars' proximity to Earth, telescope views of the Martian polar cap and other planetary features may be impressive. Outdoor observing events are free of charge.

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Mars/Add 1

Inside the Adler, the Sky Theater offers a special presentation, "Mars Tonight," which recreates the skies of August and September, including Mars' motion through the constellations. The cost of the sky show is \$5 (free for Adler members).

MARS FACTS

Last summer, the Red Planet remained out of view as it was positioned in the glare of Sun. Since last fall it has steadily moved back into view and with each passing day moves closer to Earth, becoming increasingly more eye-catching - bright and orange in the night sky. On August 28, 2003 Mars will be at opposition with the Earth. The Sun will be on one side of the Earth with Mars on the opposite. At that time, Mars, fully illuminated by the Sun, is one of the brightest objects in the sky.

- ◆ Mars' nearness to Earth has shortened the journey of *Opportunity* and *Spirit* – NASA's Mars Exploration Rovers – by several months. The two robotic rovers, due to land in December and January, are designed to search for physical evidence of water on Mars from billions of years ago. The rovers will examine rocks and soil for clues about whether past environments at their landing sites may have been hospitable to life.
- ◆ Mars is the planet most like Earth in both land surface and temperature, which is why it has been proposed for potential future human colonization.
- ◆ Known since prehistoric times, Mars was named for the Roman god of war. The name of the month March derives from Mars.
- ◆ The Red Planet is actually more "butterscotch" in color
- ◆ Mars has the largest canyon in the solar system, longer than the United States is wide.
- ◆ Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun and the seventh largest:
- ◆ Mars has two Moons: Deimos and Phobos.

More information about Mars may be found at NASA's Mars home page
<http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/planets/marspage.html>

- more -

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OTHER ADLER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Far Out Friday

First Friday of each month

5:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Enjoy the spectacle of the starry sky as you experience Far Out Fridays at the Adler! Scope out the many family activities on the first Friday of every month from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. including telescope viewing, shows in the historic Sky Theater and the StarRider Theater, live lectures by Adler astronomers, hands-on activities, special demonstrations, and Doane Observatory tours. Far Out Fridays are \$15.00 for adults,

\$12.00 for children/senior citizens, \$5.00 for Adler Members. A Family Star Pack is four for \$45.00 (2 adults/ 2 children or 1 adult/ 3 children). Far Out Fridays are generously sponsored by Food For Thought Management Group.

Friday, September 5, 7:30 pm

Bill Hartmann, Participating Scientist in the U.S. Mars Global Surveyor Mission, presents a comprehensive look at Mars comparing geologic processes on the Red Planet with those on Earth.

On September 5, the viewing of "Mars Tonight" is included in the Far Out Friday admission.

GENERAL INFORMATION

HOURS

Monday-Friday	9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Sat-Sun	9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

On the first Friday of each month the Adler offers special programs with extended hours from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Summer Hours

Through September 1, 2003

Saturday - Wednesday	9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Thursday - Friday	9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

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REGULAR ADMISSION:

Ultimate Universe Adventure is \$18.00 for adults, \$17.00 for seniors 65 and older and \$16.00 for children 4 - 17. This package includes admission and the choice of two sky shows. Galaxy Passport is \$13.00 for adults, \$12.00 for seniors 65 and older and \$11.00 for children 4 - 17. This package includes admission and choice of one sky show.

The Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum was founded in 1930 as the first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere. Its astronomy programs have reached over 40 million people during the past 73 years. Ten state-of-the-art exhibition galleries located in the glass-enclosed Sky Pavilion and the renovated landmark 1930s building present modern space exploration along with the history of astronomy. The StarRiderTheater featuring Digistar 3 is the most technologically advanced, audience-interactive planetarium, fueling the imagination of visitors during virtual flights through the cosmos. With a dedicated and professional staff, the Adler pursues its mission to present the human quest to better understand the Universe.

Adler scientists and historians, who hold joint appointments at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, are working at the forefront of research in astronomy and its fascinating history. The Adler is partially supported by a CityArts Program 4 grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. The Adler gratefully acknowledges the generous support it receives from the Chicago Park District on behalf of the citizens of Chicago.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (312) 922-STAR
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www.adlerplanetarium.org.

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