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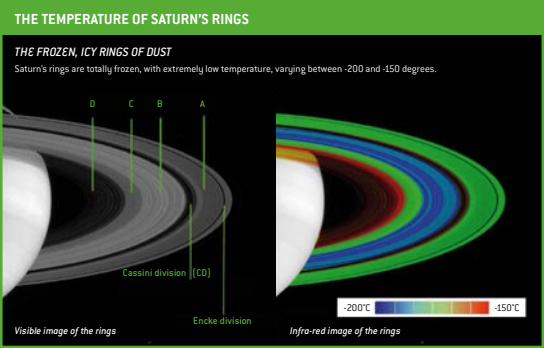
Image of Saturn obtained by the Cassini spacecraft in orbit around the giant planet

Saturn, near the end of the Solar System

THE RINGED PLANET IS A FROZEN WORLD WITH STRANGELY-SHAPED MOONS



s t o n e s



Atlas (Cassini)

"FLYING SAUCERS" IN THE RINGS
Since June 2004, the space probe *Cassini* has been orbiting around Saturn. It discovered the astonishing shape of *Pan* and *Atlas*, two of the satellites closest to Saturn. They have a noticeable equatorial bulge that makes them look like "flying saucers". The bulge is composed of recent accretions of dust from Saturn's rings.

- *Pan*: 35 x 35 x 23 km - Distance to Saturn 133,584 km
- *Atlas*: 48 x 38 x 19 km - Distance to Saturn 137,670 km



Atlas (Cassini)



Atlas (artist view)

The planet with **sixty moons**.

A billion and a half kilometers from the Sun, Saturn is the Solar System's sixth planet and the furthest away of the five planets that can be seen with the naked eye.

This giant planet, 760 times bigger than Earth in volume, is haloed by a series of **rings** that give it its distinctive, unique identity in the Solar System. The rings are shaped like very thin disks made of icy **stones** and **dust**.

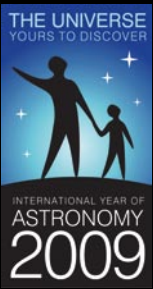
The planet has more than 60 satellites, of which 40 were discovered only since 2000.

In fact, it is like a miniature **Solar System** by itself.

Zoom

Saturn is a frozen world with an average outside temperature of -180 degrees, i.e. 180 degrees below zero or freezing point. It also revolves around itself, with each revolution taking 10 hours and 14 minutes, two times faster than Earth. The winds that howl around its equator can take on speeds of over 1,400 kilometers/hour. The rings stretch out over more than 250,000 kilometers, almost the distance between Earth and the Moon, but they are only a few dozen meters thick - like razor blades in space!

s i x t y m o o n s



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