

Image Courtesy of NASA



Neptune

Ice Giant

Year = 165 Earth Years

Day = 16 Earth Hours

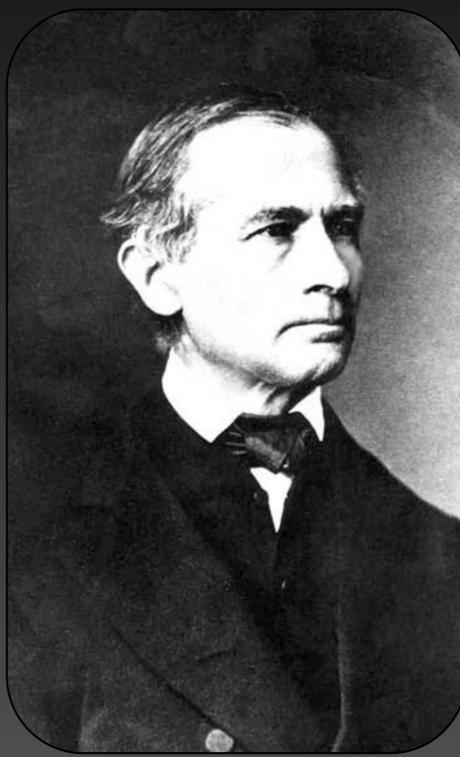
4 times the size of Earth

Radius = 15,299 miles

2.8 Billion miles from Sun

Gravity = 36.6 ft/s²

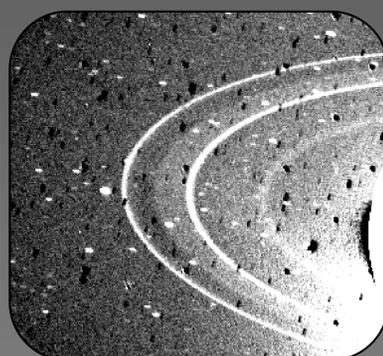
Neptune is a bitterly cold planet buffeted by supersonic winds. Eighty percent of its structure is a hot dense fluid of icy material, mainly water, methane, and ammonia. Scientists have theorized that under the cold clouds of its atmosphere is an ocean of super hot water. The planet's largest moon, Triton, is also extremely cold and has geysers that spew icy material more than five miles up into its thin atmosphere.



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Neptune is the only planet in our solar system not visible to the naked eye and was discovered by German astronomer Johann Galle using mathematical predictions made by French astronomer Urbain Le Verrier in 1846. Even though Galle was the first to spot Neptune he refused

to take credit for the discovery, attributing it to Le Verrier. Galle's main work centered on mapping planetary orbits, charting the paths of meteors, and consolidating data on all comets known at that time.



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Neptune has a ring system that is less substantial than Saturn's and were not detected until 1968 and first imaged by Voyager 2 in 1989.

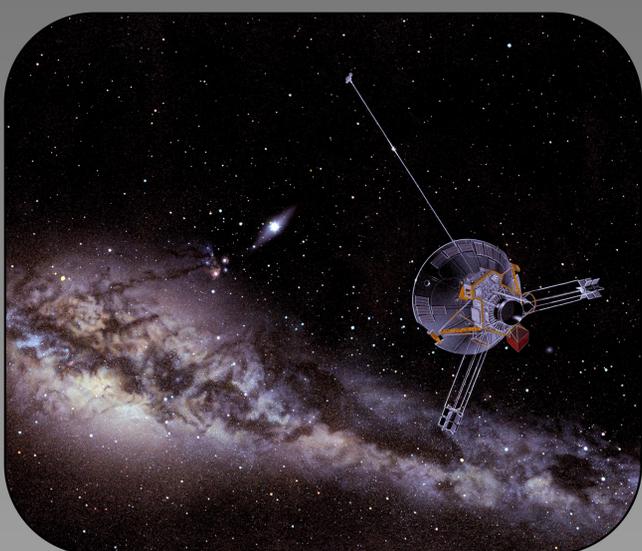


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Pioneer 10 was the first spacecraft to pass by Neptune in 1983, and is the first spacecraft to go beyond and into interstellar space. Although the spacecraft did not return much data on Neptune, it does have an interesting story. While NASA has lost contact with Pioneer 10, it is headed towards the red star Aldebaran in the constellation Taurus. It should pass by in about two million years!