

Next Mars rover nears completion

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The rover for NASA's Mars Science Laboratory mission, named Curiosity, is about 3 meters (10 feet) long, not counting the additional length that the rover's arm can be extended forward. The front of the rover is on the left in this side view. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

(PhysOrg.com) -- Assembly and testing of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory spacecraft is far enough along that the mission's rover, Curiosity, looks very much as it will when it is investigating Mars.

Testing continues this month at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., on the rover and other components of the spacecraft that will deliver Curiosity to Mars. In May and June, the [spacecraft](#) will be shipped to [NASA](#) Kennedy Space Center, Fla., where preparations will continue for launch in the period between Nov. 25 and Dec. 18, 2011.



Support equipment is holding the Mars rover Curiosity slightly off the floor. When the wheels are on the ground, the top of the rover's mast is about 2.2 meters (7 feet) above ground level. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

The mission will use [Curiosity](#) to study one of the most intriguing places on Mars -- still to be selected from among four finalist landing-site candidates. It will study whether a selected area of Mars has offered environmental conditions favorable for microbial life and for preserving

evidence about whether Martian life has existed.



Curiosity's arm and remote sensing mast carry science instruments and other tools for the mission. This image, taken April 4, 2011, inside the Spacecraft Assembly Facility at JPL shows the arm on the left and the mast just right of center. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

JPL, a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, manages the Mars Science Laboratory mission for the NASA Science Mission Directorate, Washington.

Provided by JPL/NASA

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