

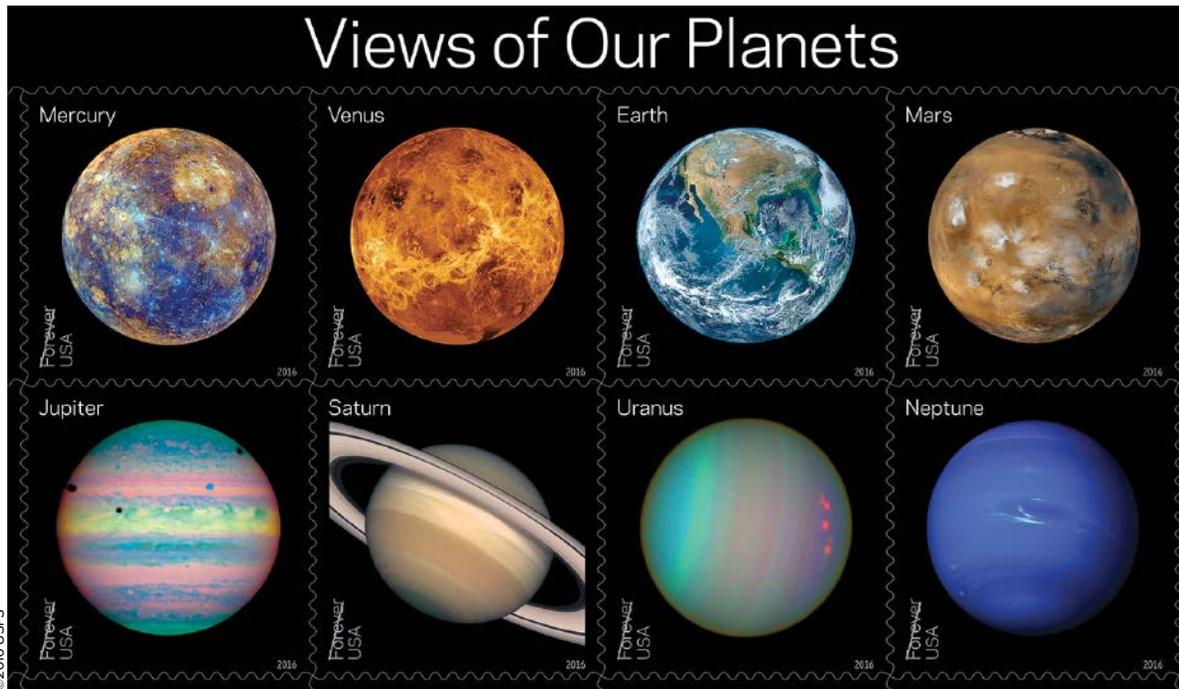
Can Biofuels Cool Our Climate?

Space-Themed Stamps

A Volcano's Hidden Plumbing

Author Identifiers
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Special Delivery: Post Office to Issue Space-Themed Stamps



The “Views of Our Planets” sheet of 16 Forever stamps (upper half shown here) depicts full-disk images of our solar system’s eight planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

This year’s new batch of U.S. postage stamps is celebrating more than flowers, fruits, and famous Americans. The U.S. Postal Service will also issue stamps in 2016 about space exploration—both real and imagined—the agency announced shortly before this year began (see <http://bit.ly/new-2016-stamps>).

A 16-stamp sheet entitled “Views of Our Planets” will showcase images of our solar system’s planets. Another four-stamp sheet labeled “Pluto—Explored!” will commemorate the historic first flyby of Pluto that took place last July. Other stamps will display vivid pictures of the full Moon and illustrations celebrating the 50th anniversary of the television premiere of *Star Trek*.

Celebrating Planetary Science and Space Exploration

These stamps could help spur public interest in science and engineering, said Richard Fienberg, director of communications for the American Astronomical Society. The “Views of Our Planets” stamp collection “is really quite profound,” he told *Eos*, noting that each planet

is not just a celestial object but a real and unique world. “Even the phrase ‘Our Planets’ is profound, as it reflects the recent discovery that our planetary system is one of billions of such systems throughout the galaxy.”

“Photos like the ones on the stamps, and discoveries like the prevalence of planets



Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the television premiere of *Star Trek*, the new *Star Trek* Forever stamps showcase four digital illustrations inspired by classic elements of the television program. Two of those illustrations are shown here.

around other stars, inspire students to become scientists and engineers, guaranteeing that the process of discovery will continue,” he added.

In 1991, the United States issued a Pluto stamp that stated “Pluto: Not Yet Explored.” One of those stamps flew aboard the New Horizons spacecraft that last year visited the dwarf planet. The 2016 Pluto stamp sheet emphasizes “Pluto—Explored!”

The old stamp “served as a rallying cry for many who wanted to mount this historic mission of space exploration,” said Alan

Stern, New Horizons principal investigator from the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colo. “Now that NASA’s New Horizons has accomplished that goal, it’s a wonderful feeling to see these new stamps join others commemorating first explorations of the planets.”

Commemorating solar system exploration is not enough for some people. “Pluto isn’t the end of the solar system; it’s the beginning of the rest of the solar system, and there’s much more left to explore,” said Emily Lakdawalla, senior editor and planetary evangelist for the Planetary Society. “I’d like to see a new challenge from the postal service, to explore unexplored distant worlds, like Haumea, Eris, or Sedna—or even some of the worlds in other solar systems, none of which had even been discovered when the Postal Service issued its ‘Pluto: Not Yet Explored’ stamp in 1991.” Nonetheless, she told *Eos*, she will be “thrilled” to use the new stamps on her correspondence.

By **Randy Showstack**, Staff Writer