BBC

THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY AT 350: AN UNTOLD HISTORY

#243 AUGUST 2025

Sky at Night

THE UK'S BEST-SELLING ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE

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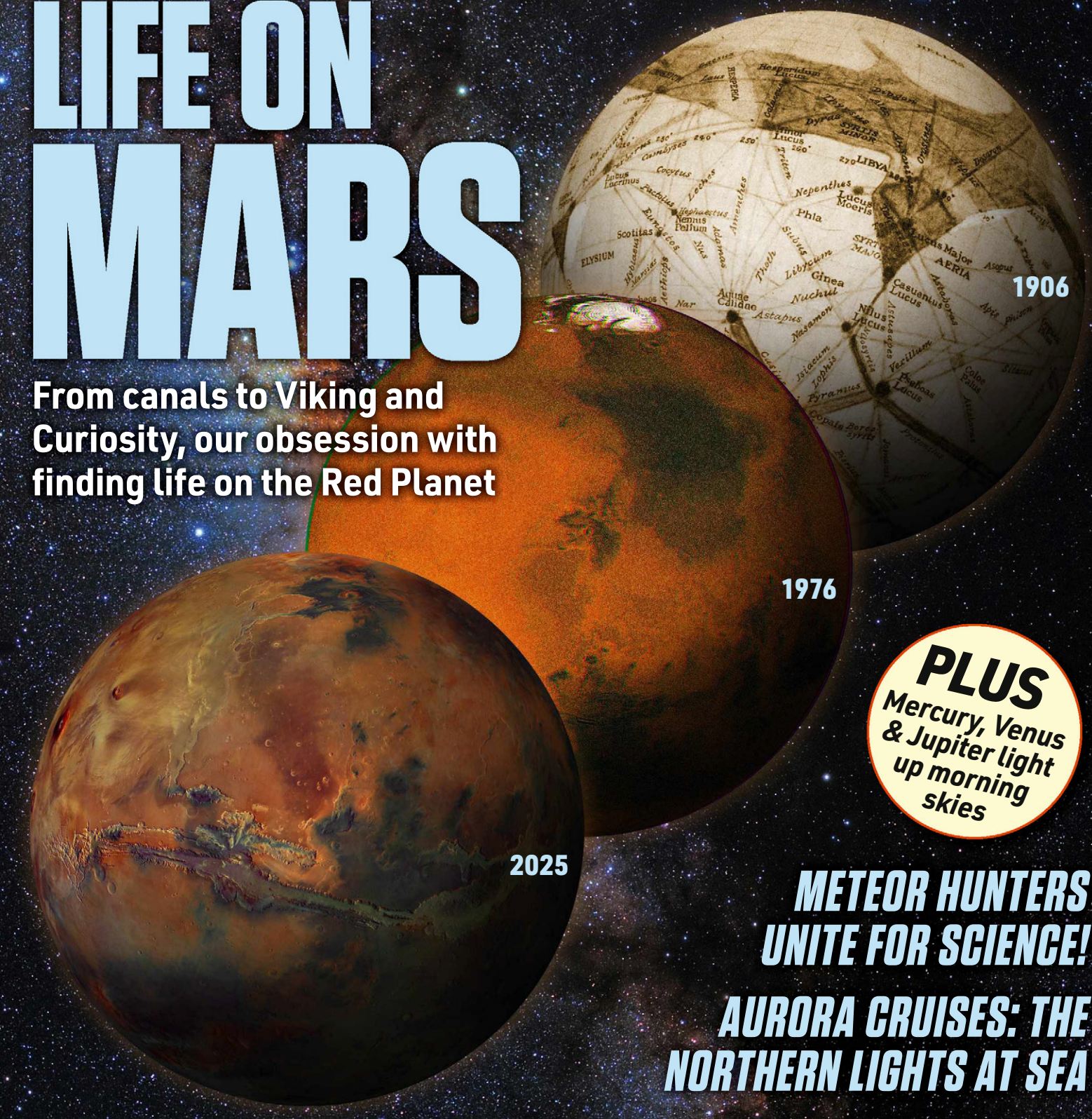
From canals to Viking and Curiosity, our obsession with finding life on the Red Planet



PLUS Mercury, Venus & Jupiter light up morning skies

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THE STAND-OUT SUMMER SIGHTS OF SCORPIUS

THE WEIRD ORIGIN OF ROCKS THAT FOLLOW EARTH'S ORBIT

▲ It took Solar Orbiter five years to reach the right viewing angle for the groundbreaking images

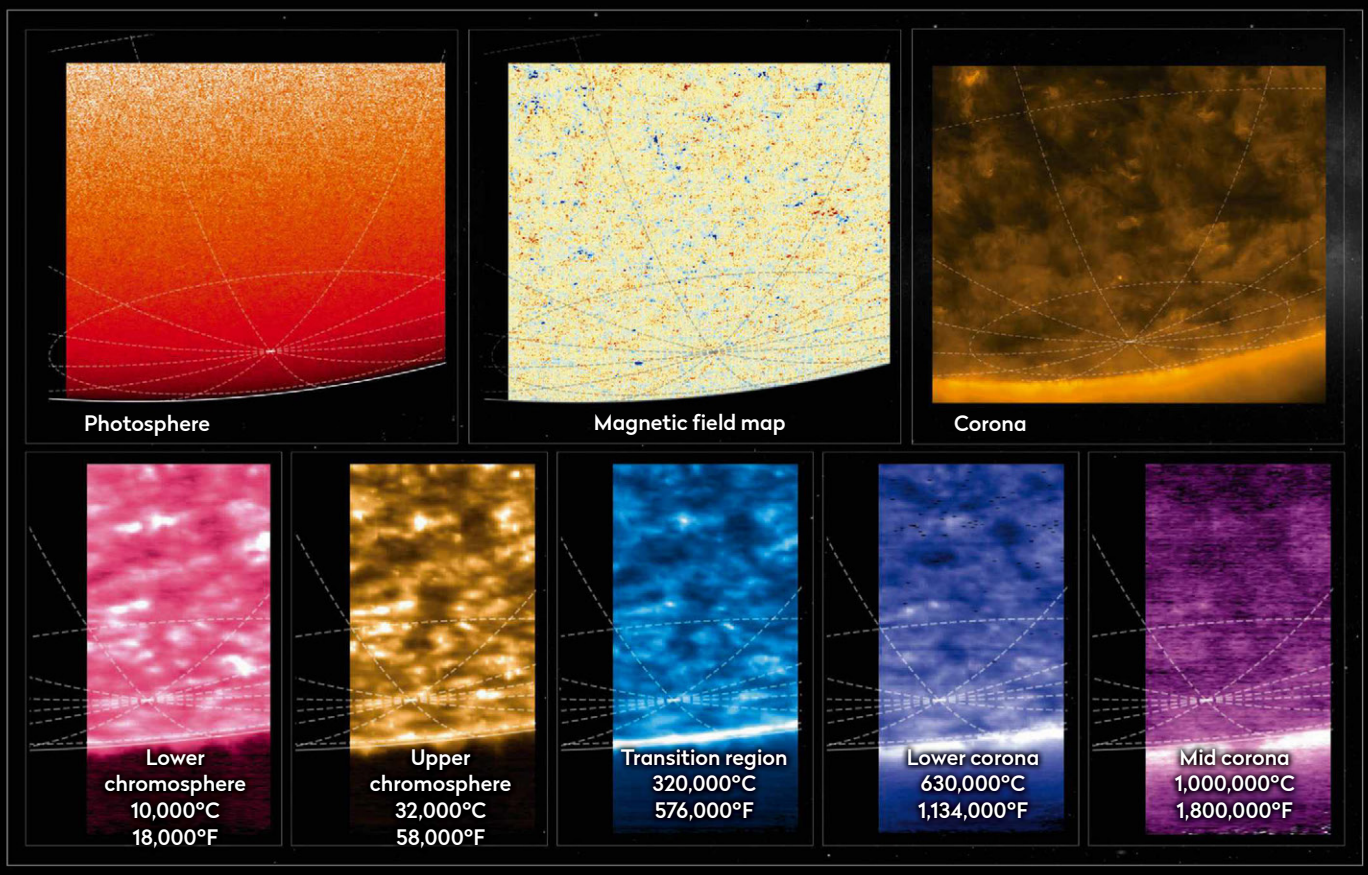
Solar orbiter snaps Sun's south pole

European Space Agency probe beams back first images and video of the Sun from a never-before-seen angle

Until now, every image of our Sun has been taken from around its equator. Now, ESA's Solar Orbiter spacecraft has pulled off a solar first and imaged the Sun from its south pole. These are humanity's first-ever views of our star from this angle.

"The Sun is our nearest star, giver of life and potential disruptor of modern space and ground power systems, so it is imperative that we understand how it works and learn to predict its behaviour. These new, unique views from our Solar Orbiter mission are the beginning of a new era of solar science," says Professor Carole Mundell, ESA's director of science.

Analysing the data taken from all three of Solar Orbiter's imaging instruments will tell scientists about material moving in the Sun's outer layers. As well as revealing unexpected behaviour, like turbulent whorls of gas around the Sun's poles, the new observations will be key to understanding the Sun's magnetic fields and its 11-year cycle. **www.esa.int**



▲ As Solar Orbiter imaged high above the pole in different wavelengths, it revealed (top row, from left): iron particles; the surface magnetic field; outer atmosphere (corona), and (bottom row): layers above the surface, from the cooler chromosphere to the million-degree corona