

Venus Probe May Reveal Form Of Life

By United Press International

Venus is a fog-shrouded sphere of mystery spinning through space in an orbit between 100 million and 26 million miles from earth.

Named after the Roman goddess of love, the planet has almost completely defied efforts of astronomers to probe its surface.

The planet is considered of great interest because scientists feel there is a possibility it may either sustain human life or be somewhat similar to the earth.

The planet is slightly smaller than earth, with an estimated diameter of 7,700 miles.

It moves around the sun at an average distance of 67 million miles in 225 days.

The planet, like the earth, is enveloped in an atmosphere, but unlike the earth the clouds appear to form a complete wrapping around its surface.

Venus shines with a dazzling light because of the great intensity of the solar radiation present. This radiation is almost twice the amount on the earth's surface.

The atmosphere of the planet appears to consist mainly of carbon dioxide. For some time it was believed it contained no free oxygen or water vapor.

But in 1959 a telescope sent to an altitude of about 100,000 feet indicated that both free oxygen and water vapor were present, according to American scientists. This discovery has not been completely confirmed.

Scientists estimate that with free oxygen and water vapor present, Venus, because of its nearness to the sun, would be a steaming jungle.

Previously it had been thought that its surface was nothing but a desert.

The latest observations also indicate that the planet does have seasons. The current estimates place its daytime temperature range from about 212 F., the boiling point of water, on its sunny side, to about 10 degrees F. on its dark side.

Venus is the second planet in order around the sun. Closest to the sun is the planet Mercury.



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