

From Earth To the Solar System Text for an Introductory Panel

One star, eight planets, numerous moons, and myriad comets, asteroids, and other small bodies: this is Earth's local neighborhood known as the Solar System. Despite studying it for centuries, we still have many questions about the Solar System, such as How did Earth and its complex oasis of life come to be? Are there habitable worlds other than our own? Are we alone in the Universe? The images of *From Earth to the Solar System* (FETTSS) represent humanity's efforts in addressing those questions.

Including contributions from backyard astronomers, large telescopes in space, and even point-and-shoot cameras, the collection represents the current state of exploration as seen through the eyes of the scientific community. Beyond traditional views of the Sun and planets, the collection features snapshots of field locations here on Earth where astrobiologists are engaged in hands-on research exploring the origins, extremes, and limits of life. From a river of acid in Spain to rock outcrops in Western Australia to boiling springs in Yellowstone National Park, these sites are crucibles of discovery that inform and shape how we explore, both within our Solar System and beyond.

FETTSS celebrates NASA's Year of the Solar System! Spanning a Martian Year—23 months—it is a time of unprecedented activity in Solar System exploration, beginning in October, 2010 and ending in late 2012. NASA's missions during this time are diverse: EPOXI and Stardust NExT encounter their comets, Dawn arrives at the asteroid Vesta, MESSENGER begins circling Mercury, Juno departs for Jupiter, Mars Science Laboratory journeys to the surface of Mars, and GRAIL orbits the Moon.

FETTSS is based on the award-winning 2009 International Year of Astronomy project, *From Earth to the Universe* (FETTU). FETTU has been exhibited in shopping malls, metro stations, parks, airports, and other unique locations, reaching millions of people all over the world. As an extension of that effort, FETTSS continues to inspire our imagination and fuel our fascination with space.

The images in FETTSS are yours to discover. Perhaps you will find them inspirational, astonishing, and beautiful. Or perhaps they will elicit a different response. Whatever you take away from these images, we hope they instill a sense that the Solar System—and the wonders it contains—belongs to us all.