

## 2 Going to Mars

### Before you read

1. Which planet would you most like to visit? Why?
2. Do you think the planet Mars would be a nice place to visit? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that there is life on Mars?



### Reading

- 1 Mars probably isn't a very nice place to visit. There isn't a lot of air or water, and in winter it is colder than Antarctica! But the scenery is spectacular. There are mountains that are three times as high as Mount Everest, and canyons that are three times as deep and five times as long as the Grand Canyon!
- 2 Mars is only a small planet. It is about half as big as the Earth. However scientists are very interested in it. The first spacecraft to visit Mars was *Mariner 4* in 1965. Since then, more than thirty spacecraft have been sent to learn more about the planet and its two small moons. The most successful of these until now has been the USA's *Phoenix*, which landed on Mars on 25 May 2008. *Phoenix* took more than 30,000 pictures of the planet. Scientists have learned a lot about Mars from these pictures.
- 3 More spacecraft will be sent to Mars in the future. But when will people start going with them? Some scientists think it could be as soon as 2030. Whenever we go, it will be a long trip. The first travellers to Mars will be away from home for more than two years. It won't be easy, but that hasn't stopped us in the past. We've already been to the moon. Mars is next.

## Vocabulary

A. Complete each sentence with the correct word or phrase.

half as big    successful    planet    deep    three times as

1. Jupiter is the largest \_\_\_\_\_ in our solar system.
2. My brother's new puppy is so small. He's only \_\_\_\_\_ as my father's boot!
3. Be careful swimming in the lake. The water is very \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A plane ride from Perth to Sydney takes \_\_\_\_\_ long as a plane ride from Tokyo to Osaka.
5. Ravi moved from Bangladesh to the UK in 1994. At first he was very poor, but now he has a \_\_\_\_\_ computer business.

B. Choose the correct word or phrase with the same meaning as the blue words in each sentence.

valley    journey    wonderful    people who study science  
things that you see around you

1. Scientists have found that 50 per cent of Americans are too fat.
2. It's a long walk to the bottom of the canyon and it takes a long time to climb out again.
3. Did you see the closing ceremony for the Beijing Olympics? The fireworks were spectacular!
4. Last year I went on a trip to Africa.
5. The Himalayas have some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.

## In other words

A. What is the main purpose of the passage? Circle 1, 2 or 3.

1. To describe what it would be like to visit Mars.
2. To describe past and future visits to Mars.
3. To describe the planet Mars.

B. Match each heading to the correct paragraph in the passage.

1. Paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ Next stop: Mars!
2. Paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ A spectacular planet.
3. Paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ Collecting information about Mars.

## General understanding

Circle T for true or F for false for each of the following statements.

1. Mars is the largest planet in our solar system.	T / F
2. Mars has no mountains or canyons.	T / F
3. <i>Phoenix</i> was the first spacecraft to reach Mars.	T / F
4. The first astronauts to travel to Mars will spend more than two years away from Earth.	T / F

## In detail

Write short answers to the following questions.

1. Why isn't Mars a nice place to visit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How high are some of the mountains on Mars? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How big is Mars? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what year did the first spacecraft visit Mars? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many spacecraft have been sent to Mars and its moons so far? \_\_\_\_\_
6. When do some scientists think people will begin travelling to Mars? \_\_\_\_\_

## In focus

Match the adjectives to the correct objects.

1. small
2. spectacular
3. successful
4. small
5. long

the <i>Phoenix</i> trip
Mars
the trip to Mars
Mars's moons
the scenery on Mars