



Venus is the Roman goddess of love and beauty. She is known as Aphrodite in Greek mythology. The planet is so named probably because it is the brightest of the planets known to the ancients. This is the symbol for Venus:

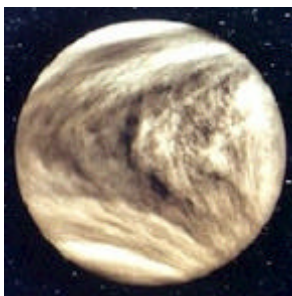


Venus is the second planet from the Sun, and the sixth largest of all the nine planets.

Venus' hot temperature is due to what we call "the Greenhouse Effect." The large amount of carbon dioxide in Venus' atmosphere acts like a blanket. The



heat gets trapped underneath the thick layer of clouds. Because the heat has nowhere to go, Venus gets hotter and stays hot.



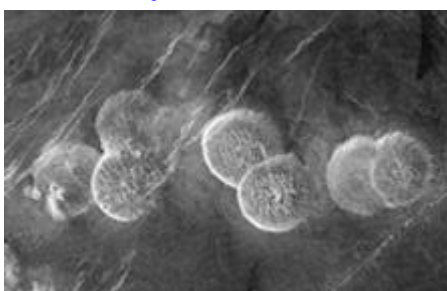
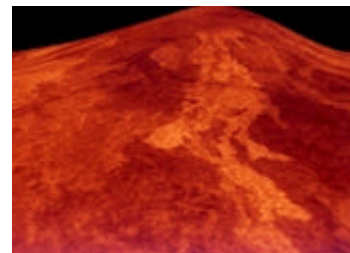
Venus probably once had large amounts of water like Earth, but it all boiled away. The same thing would have happened to the Earth had it been just a little closer to the Sun. Because Venus is so similar to our Earth, we sometimes call it Earth's "sister planet."

In what ways are they similar?

- ~ Venus is only slightly smaller than Earth
- ~ Both have few craters indicating relatively young surfaces.
- ~ Their densities and chemical compositions are similar.

Most of Venus' surface consists of gently rolling plains. You won't find many mountains or hills.

Data from the Magellan spacecraft shows that much of Venus' surface is covered by lava flows. There are many large volcanoes (like the ones in Hawaii) such as Sif Mons. Scientists have recently found that there are still many active volcanoes on Venus!



Magellan's images show a wide variety of interesting and unique features including the "pancake volcanoes."

Look for Venus! Venus is usually visible with the naked eye. Though it's not correct to call it so, Venus is sometimes called the "morning star" or the "evening star." It is by far the brightest "star" in the sky.

~ Venus is a small, rocky planet blanketed in a thick layer of yellowish clouds. These clouds are not made of water (like the ones here on Earth). Instead, they are formed from a poison called sulphuric acid.

- ~ Venus' surface is very hot - about 400 degrees Celsius!
- ~ Even though Venus is very cloudy, it's simply *too hot* for rain to form.
- ~ The first spacecraft to visit Venus was Mariner 2 in 1962. Venus has since been visited by more than 20 spacecraft in all so far! Some of these visiting spacecraft include: Pioneer Venus, Venera 7, Venera 9 and Magellan.
- ~ Venus has no moons.