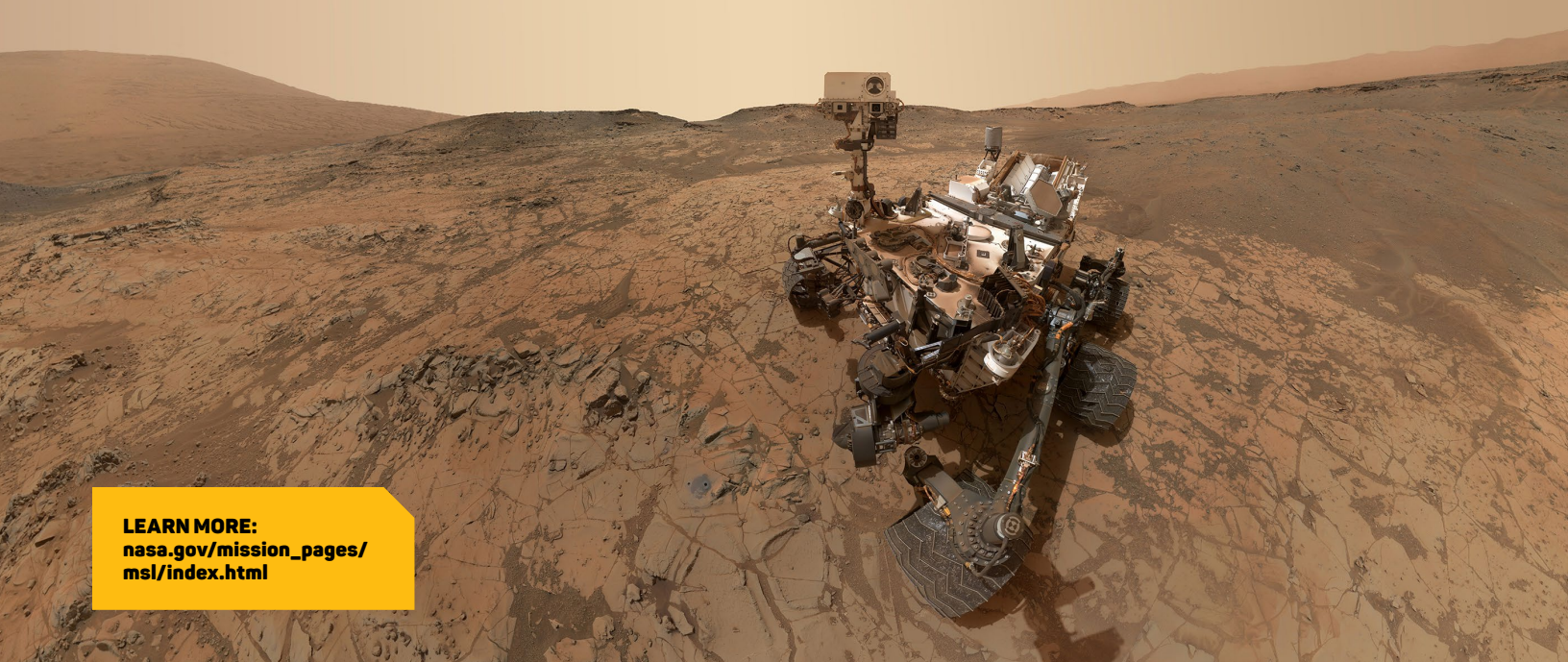


Curiosity Explores Mars

This car-sized rover has been cruising over the red planet since 2012.

This self-portrait of NASA's Curiosity Mars rover shows the vehicle at the *Mojave* site. The scene combines dozens of images taken during January 2015 by a camera at the end of the rover's robotic arm.



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Rovers like Curiosity give scientists a close-up view of planets in our solar system. The Curiosity rover is equipped to act like a scientific laboratory on Mars. Its on-board tools—including cameras, spectrometers, and radiation detectors—allow the rover to accurately measure and record the properties of Mars' soil, rocks, and atmosphere. While humans can't yet travel to Mars, the mission science team can answer questions through physical exploration and experimentation. For example, the Curiosity team is interested in investigating if Mars ever had an environment capable of supporting microbial life. This could help determine whether life could have existed on the red planet and, if it could have existed, what it might look like. We haven't found it yet, but how do you imagine life on Mars?



Curiosity snapped this picture of its own wheels in 2016 to look for signs of damage caused by sharp rocks. While they might look like rubber tires, Curiosity's wheels are actually made from solid pieces of aluminum.