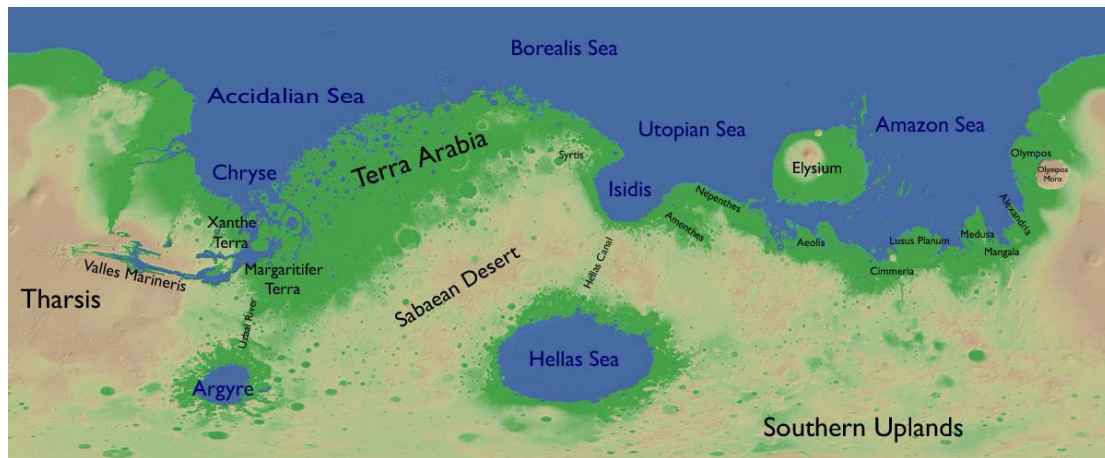


Geography



The northern hemisphere of Mars is very different from the southern hemisphere. The southern hemisphere is on average higher than the northern, and is dominated by great cold deserts: the Southern Uplands. The northern hemisphere was originally mainly lowland, and is now dominated by the Borealis Sea. Between the hemispheres is an irregular strip where most human habitation lies.

Human settlements are divided into three major regions with relatively little contact. The Chryse Bay, the Marineris canyons and Argyre forms one, dominated by the Xanthe Empire. It is sometimes called the western hemisphere or the Marineris hemisphere. The second region borders the Borealis Sea around the mini-continent Elysium, often called the eastern hemisphere, Cimmerian hemisphere or the Elysian Sea. In the south lies the isolated Hellas region, a narrow strip north of the Hellas Sea.

The geography is also strongly influenced by the volcanic high plateaus of Tharsis and Elysia. Especially Tharsis forms a powerful natural barrier west of Marineris to any travel towards the Elysian hemisphere; the only realistic way is to go east around Terra Arabia to reach it.

The Teller Canals

Dug by the MTN using nuclear explosives. The Teller Canals connect the major bodies of water and allow melt water from the south pole to run north. Most canals are perfectly straight, banked with rubble.

The most important Teller Canal was the Hellas Canal, linking the Hellenic Sea with Isidis and the Borealis Sea. Western Arabia also has many canals. Most canals connect crater lakes with other lakes and seas, to promote the hydrological cycle. They are excellent transport ways, although many are becoming silty.

The Western Hemisphere

Terra Arabia

A broken coast and forested plains region extending east of Chryse Bay. The landscape is filled with craters and small mountains, but has none of the enormous plateaus. The climate is Scandinavian in the extensive western coastal regions, with rainy summers and cold (often stormy) winters. In the inland the climate becomes more of an inland climate, with hot dry winds blowing in from Sabaea. In the north the land becomes very similar to Siberia, with taiga and extensive ice-swamps.

Western Arabia is extensively forested with conifers and bamboo, which has produced a thriving trade in lumber and iron. Many of the craters have been connected by rivers or canals, producing a traversable network. Inhabitants often use sleds or skates during the periods the canals are frozen.

Argyre

A major lake on the southern hemisphere, around the size of the Caspian Sea. It is an important nexus of Teller Canals from the south, linking together to form the Uzbai river which moves water north. Argyre is similar to Hellas; it has a cold climate and tends to freeze over in the winters. In the northern lowlands cities huddle in craters protected from the desert winds and winter blizzards.

The Borealis Sea

The main sea of Mars. Usually divided into smaller seas: Chryse / Viking, Acidalia, the Utopian Sea (east of Arabia, west of Elysia), the Arcadian Sea, the Amazonian Sea and the Elysian Sea (the region around Elysia). Isidis forms a major bay, and in the Margaritifer region a number of bays reach into the Valles Marineris.

The water is salty and filled with silt; many simply call it the Brown Sea. Even in the summer icebergs drift in the water, often becoming stranded near the shores.

Chryse / Viking Bay

Sea arm located east and north of Vallis Marineris and Margaritifer. Location of the first probes and settlements, giving it its old name Viking Bay. It is a cold and stormy sea but important for shipping between Terra Arabia and the southern lands.

Margaritifer

Region east of Marineris and west of Arabia, dominated by former highlands and deep river valleys. Today it is a fertile area with Mediterranean climate, criss-crossed by sea-arms and rivers. Most of the islands and peninsulas slope fairly steeply into the sea, with climbing cities and farms and plateau farmland and forests across their tops.

Xanthe

Plateau landscape west of the Margaritifer region, northeast of the Marineris region. To the west it blends into the extremely dry Luna desert which gradually rises towards Tarsis.

Uzbai River

The river flows through Hale, Bond and Holden towards Viking Bay with the Nirgal as a tributary. Near Pyrrahe a canal connects it to the sea; northwards it joins the mighty Ares river. These rivers provide the main way to the Argyre region. The Uzbai Trade Federation controls the river and the nearby highlands. It is a fractious federation of city-states held together mainly by trade interests and tradition.

Valles Marineris

The deep canyon linking the Borealis Sea with the Tharsis highlands.

Noctis Labyrinthus

Canyon system at the western end of Marineris, on the top of the Tharsis plateau. Extremely dry and isolated.

The Eastern hemisphere

Isidis

A Mediterranean region surrounded by highlands. The Isidis region gets both warm winds from the surrounding highlands and wet sea winds. The climate is Mediterranean, although occasionally in the late summer a storm cell may be lodged there causing the infamous "Isidis week-long storms".

Aeolis

Coastal region south of Elysia.

Cimmeria

Upland region southeast of Elysia.

Terra Cimmeria is the formal name for the lands south of Elysium. It is also the name of a nation in the vicinity of Apolinaris Patera (an extinct volcano).

Elysium

Major island in the Borealis Sea, a volcanic region similar to Tharsis. The southeastern shores are very smooth dry plains, gradually being submerged in the rising sea. The west coast has a wetter climate, with rainwater being channeled through volcanic canyons of the west of Elysium Mons.

Nepenthus

Island region southwest of Elysia.

Olympian Coast

The coast west of Tharsis, north and south of Olympus Mons. It borders to the Arcadian and Amazonian seas.

Amazonia

Amazonia marks the point where the Cimmerian coast turns northwards. To the east lies the Tharsis plateau, to the north the Olympian Coast and to the south the wastes of Mangala. The Amazonian coast is populous and the gateway to the Worldhouse.

"The Worldhouse", The IMAST Region

The initial colonists knew that the terraforming would take centuries and that they would not want to wait so long to actually set their foot on the planet. Hence they began to build extensive habitats, the largest of which was the Worldhouse- The entire structure is several hundred kilometers across, located on Daedalia Planum, southwest of Arsia Mons. It has been inhabited since the beginning, a place of myth and legend, embattled and a refuge, a mystical Shangri-la and a political powerhouse.

The Eastern House

A separate IMAST region near Oenotria Scopulus and the Clarke Dam in eastern Sabaea. Intended as a refuge from the Worldhouse in case of disaster, base of operations in the eastern hemisphere and especially as the base during the building of the extensive Hellas Canal. After the Crash it was a major center of power in the Eastern hemisphere. The main systems were destroyed in the Euplan War, and parts of the walls were broken..

The South

Hellas Sea

A small sea on the southern hemisphere, roughly the size of the Mediterranean of Earth. Hellas is the deepest sea on Mars, an old impact basin isolated by mountains and highlands. The southern part is always frozen, while the northern part is traversable in the southern summer. The climate of the region is cold and prone to extremes. The Hellas region has always been isolated, and the common idiom "Travel to Hellas" implies a long hard (and possibly fruitless) quest.

The Hellas Canal

Connecting Hellas to Isidis is the enormous Hellas Canal, the greatest engineering feat on the planet. It was the result of decades of work for the MTN; it digs 2000 kilometers through Sabaea to Isidis. It stretches underground for hundreds of kilometers at a stretch, both to avoid becoming frozen in the winter and to handle the height differences. Near Oenotria scopulus lies the immense Clarke Dam complex, intended to act as a lock system and power much of the region.

The Landing Zones

Regions where larger iceflowers and carbonaceous meteors were directed. Most were located under what is presently seas, but several locations in the southern uplands such as Flaugerues, East Icaria and Newton remain. The landscape has been broken by recurrent meteors, causing local floods and badlands.

Sabaea

One of the hottest and driest regions on Mars. It forms a natural barrier together with Tyrreniea between the Hellenic Sea and the north.

Space

Earth

Earth is a noticeable bluish-white star in the sky, acting a bit like Venus did in the Earth's sky. It is the centre of some astrological traditions which tries to predict the future by studying the signs of the weather systems across its continents.

The Dyson Shell

The posthumans converted Mercury, Venus, much of the asteroid belt and several moons from the outer system into the Dyson Shell (or "the Sphere", "the Dyson"), a vast cloud of solar collectors, habitats and unknown structures just inside Earth orbit. While immensely threatening while construction, by now it is just a fact of life that Mars is the second planet and that there is a huge dark

sphere surrounding the sun. It is mainly visible just after sunset and before sunrise as it blocks the stars. While it absorbs a sizeable fraction of the Sun's output it lets out light towards the Earth and Mars according to the Cruithne Accords.

Speculations are endless about the Shell. The Dysonists believe it to be inhabited by benign posthumans. Others fear that the aloof posthumans might one day break the Accords and condemn Mars to eternal darkness. Some claim the Shell is abandoned, or that the inhabitants have regressed. Many astronomers spend time observing the individual structures orbiting the sun, trying to discern their purpose.

Phobos

The innermost moon, site of extensive shuttle bays, factories and habitats from the Red Era. Most has been mothballed, although the Stargazers gathered as much equipment they could.

Deimos

The outermost moon. Also heavily industrialized, but little is known what exists there.

The Solettas

A number of solar reflectors orbiting Mars, adding extra sunlight and influencing climate. Several noble families have the codes of their solettas and other orbital systems.