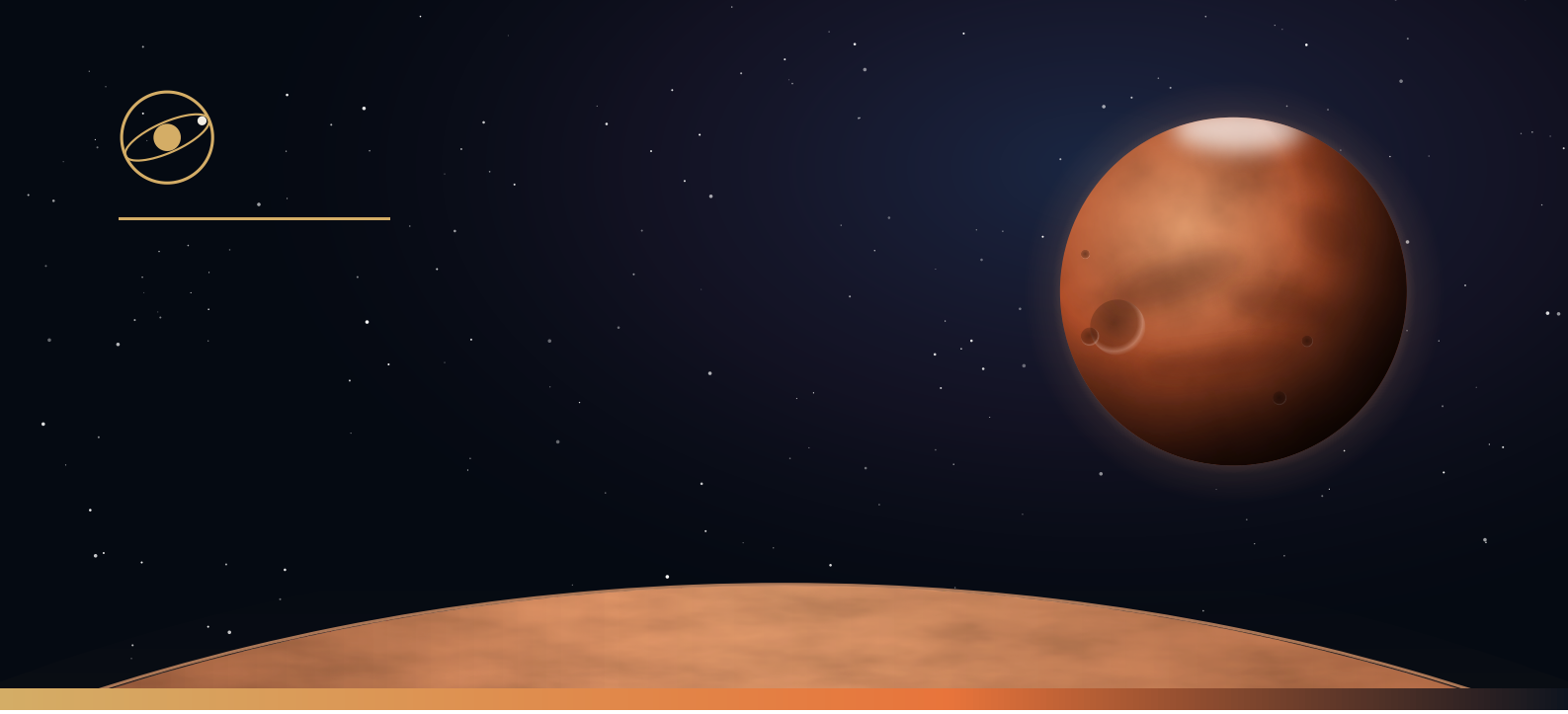
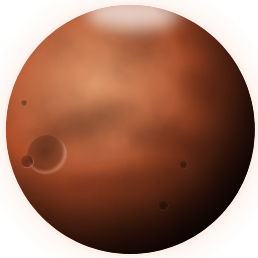


Mars Colony 1 and Martian Excursions — Destination Guide

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Mars Colony 1 is the centrepiece of the Inner Planets Survey and Grand Solar Tour. A three-night stay at humanity's first permanent Martian settlement, with access to five distinct excursions ranging from the Cydonia Highlands to the highest point in the solar system. This guide covers the colony itself, each available excursion, the unique preparation requirements for Mars, and practical advice for getting the most from the Mars stay.

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1. Mars Colony 1 Overview

Mars Colony 1 was established in 2041 and is built into the basaltic rock of Hellas Planitia's northern shelf — a location chosen for its natural radiation shielding and proximity to confirmed subsurface water ice deposits. The colony supports approximately 2,400 permanent residents and researchers, and receives expedition visitors on a scheduled rotation coordinated with Pelorus Voyages and two other licensed operators.

The colony is a pressurised habitat complex connected by enclosed tunnels, maintained at Earth-standard atmospheric composition throughout. Casual clothing is appropriate inside; no suit or helmet is required in any part of the interior. The expedition wing — where Pelorus Voyages passengers are accommodated — is maintained separately from the residential and research quarters used by permanent colonists. Expedition wing rooms are private for Navigator and Pathfinder passengers and shared (two passengers, same gender) for Pioneer passengers.

Mars Colony 1 is the most terrestrially normal of the voyage's destinations. Gravity is 0.38g — low enough to feel light and bouncy, but high enough that movement is intuitive. Most passengers find Mars easier to adapt to than the Moon; the higher gravity reduces the vestibular disorientation some experience in very low gravity, and the three-night stay allows genuine rest and acclimatisation rather than the rapid turnaround of shorter stops.

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2. Arriving and Living at MC-1

The transition from transit gravity (0.15g) to Martian surface gravity (0.38g) is noticeable but not dramatic — objects feel approximately twice as heavy as during transit. The first few hours in 0.38g are typically described as energising; the body has been compensating for lower gravity, and the slightly higher pull feels positive. By the end of the first day, some passengers experience mild fatigue as the body readjusts its cardiovascular baseline.

Mars Colony 1 operates on a **24-hour-40-minute Martian sol** (day). Pelorus Voyages excursion scheduling uses Earth UTC as the reference clock, but frames activity timing around the local sol to take advantage of surface light conditions. Sol 1 of the Mars stay is typically an arrival and orientation day; excursions begin on Sol 2.

Martian sunrise is one of the most remarked-upon experiences of the stay. The sky transitions from a dark teal at pre-dawn to a distinctive butterscotch yellow-orange as the sun rises through the thin, iron-rich atmosphere. The dust content in the atmosphere varies by season; peak dust storm periods may reduce EVA visibility. Regional dust storms occasionally delay surface excursions by 24 hours — Pelorus Voyages will notify affected passengers and rearrange the schedule if a delay occurs.

Meals and common areas at MC-1 include a Pelorus Voyages dining room in the expedition wing (managed under the same cabin class dining rules as the vessel), access to the colony's common concourse where colonists and researchers also eat and socialise, and a Pelorus Voyages lounge area for briefings and evening programming. The fresh produce situation at Mars is genuinely excellent — the colony's hydroponics programme produces leafy greens, tomatoes, cherry peppers, and herbs daily, and

these make their way into the expedition dining menu. Passengers often note the MC-1 menus as among the best food of the voyage.

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3. Cydonia Highlands Formation Complex

The Cydonia Highlands complex lies in the northern lowlands of Mars, approximately 600 kilometres north-northwest of Mars Colony 1. Access is by pressurised transport shuttle with a flight time of roughly 90 minutes each way. The excursion is included in Navigator and Pathfinder standard Mars packages; Pioneer passengers may purchase it as an add-on.

The site is known primarily because of the Viking 1 orbiter's 1976 photograph of a 3-kilometre-wide mesa whose lighting and image compression made it appear to resemble a humanoid face. The "Face on Mars" became one of the most discussed features in planetary exploration history. Subsequent high-resolution imaging revealed an eroded mesa with no artificial characteristics under improved lighting — but the cultural impact of the original Viking image is itself part of the story, and the Cydonia interpretive centre treats the full history seriously.

What the geological survey has established is that several formations in the Cydonia region exhibit angular geometry uncommon in typical Martian erosion patterns. The interpretive centre presents the scientific and cultural history without advocacy for any particular conclusion:

- The scientific wing explains the range of geological mechanisms — preferential erosion along fracture planes, differential hardness layering, impact ejecta redistribution — that produce angular structures consistent with Cydonia's formations without invoking artificial construction.
- The xenoarchaeological wing presents the dissenting hypothesis with its supporting observations and the methodological criticisms from the geological mainstream. This is the scientific subfield that emerged from the Cydonia debate, examining geological anomalies on Mars and other bodies for evidence of past non-human activity.

Both wings cite current peer-reviewed literature. Pelorus Voyages takes no position on xenoarchaeological hypotheses.

Surface excursion to the formation exterior allows approach to within **20 metres** of the formations. Closer approach is prohibited under the Mars Surface Heritage Regulations (Cydonia is a Category B scientific preservation zone). No sampling, marking, or physical contact with formation surfaces is permitted. Drones of any size are prohibited; Pelorus Voyages permits drones only in the Ceres Waystation surface zone.

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4. Hellas Basin Overlook

Hellas Planitia is the largest confirmed impact basin on Mars — 2,300 kilometres in diameter and 7.2 kilometres below the Martian mean surface level. The floor of Hellas is the lowest point on Mars. The Hellas Basin Overlook excursion is a half-day trip to the basin's northwestern rim, providing a view into the depression.

The experience of the overlook is counterintuitive. Hellas is too large for its full depth to register from a single vantage point; the human eye cannot resolve a structure 2,300 kilometres across. What is apparent instead is the atmospheric difference. At the basin floor, atmospheric pressure is approximately 20 to 30 percent higher than at MC-1 — still far below breathable levels, but enough to affect dust dynamics and occasionally support short-lived liquid water films at the deepest points. On clear days, a distinct haze is visible at the basin floor: a ghost of a thicker atmosphere that exists nowhere else on Mars.

Sunrise timing — the Hellas excursion is best experienced at sunrise, when the shadow line moving across the basin floor creates a slow, vast shift of light that takes more than an hour to cross the full width. Pelorus Voyages schedules the excursion as a sunrise trip wherever possible. Departures from MC-1 on sunrise-day schedules are typically around 0430 local time; passengers who book the Hellas excursion should plan accordingly.

The standard excursion accesses the overlook via pressurised transport rover with an enclosed viewing section under a filtered dome. An **outer EVA option** is available for passengers who wish to stand on the rim surface in suit — a 30-minute extension that provides observation without glass between the viewer and the Martian sky, at the cost of the suit procedures and time overhead. The standard MC-1 EVA briefing must have been completed before the EVA option is available.

Hellas Basin Overlook is included for Navigator and Pathfinder passengers. Pioneer passengers may purchase it individually.

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5. Terraforming Operations Zone

The Terraforming Operations Zone is an active working site approximately 40 kilometres northwest of MC-1, accessible by pressurised transport rover in about 35 minutes. It is a guided tour of the atmospheric seeding installation — the early-stage infrastructure of a project measured in centuries. Navigator and Pathfinder passengers have it included; Pioneer passengers may add it on.

The installation pumps catalytic compounds into the lower Martian atmosphere to gradually thicken it and raise the surface temperature. The interpretive centre at the zone entrance frames the scale of the project: visitors are observing an early chapter of an engineering effort intended to outlast any individual human lifetime. The centre explains what the monitoring station readings actually mean in terms of long-term atmospheric change.

Beyond the interpretive centre, the tour enters the active installation area. **An EVA helmet is required beyond the interpretive centre, including inside the greenhouse dome sections.** This surprises many visitors who expect the domes to be fully breathable. The domes are pressurised to approximately 0.3 Earth atmospheres — sufficient to support the plant growth experiments inside, but not breathable by humans without a helmet. The standard MC-1 surface suit is all that is needed in the dome sections; no additional equipment is required beyond the helmet. Attempting to remove the helmet inside the domes constitutes a safety violation and results in immediate excursion termination.

The greenhouse dome sections contain active biological material: engineered cyanobacterial cultures and early-stage vascular plant experiments. Photography is permitted; flash photography inside the domes is prohibited (disrupts controlled light-cycle experiments). No touching of plant material, culture vessels, or monitoring equipment.

The return to MC-1 must depart the zone no later than 60 minutes before the Airlock Bay B check-in deadline. The tour coordinator manages this timing.

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6. Olympus Mons Caldera Rim

Olympus Mons is the largest volcano in the solar system: 21.9 kilometres above the Martian mean surface, 600 kilometres at its base, with a caldera 80 kilometres in diameter at the summit. It has been inactive for tens of millions of years but remains intact — Mars lacks plate tectonics, so there is nothing to erode or subduct the structure over geological time.

The Caldera Rim excursion is **Pathfinder class only** and is included in the Pathfinder fare (subject to the fitness test). The excursion involves a pressurised shuttle flight from MC-1 to a base camp at approximately 19 kilometres elevation, a guide-led traverse to the caldera rim at 21.9 kilometres, and a return to base camp for the return flight. Total duration is approximately 10 hours.

The caldera presents an 80-kilometre-wide collapse complex several kilometres deep. The scale is not intuitively graspable from the rim — most passengers describe a period of simply sitting at the edge and waiting for the scale to register. It does not resolve quickly.

The Olympus Fitness Test is a mandatory prerequisite and is not the same as the standard voyage medical clearance. The fitness test assesses cardiovascular and musculoskeletal capacity for sustained exertion in the EVA suit under Martian atmospheric conditions. It is conducted at MC-1 by Pelorus Voyages medical staff, takes approximately two hours, and must be completed at least **48 hours before the scheduled excursion departure**. The test is pass/fail; passengers who do not pass are not eligible for the Caldera Rim excursion on that voyage.

Pathfinder passengers should book the Olympus Fitness Test for the first morning of the Mars stay — arrival day, before Sol 2 excursions begin. Slots are limited and fill quickly at peak departure windows. Standard medical clearance is not a substitute for the fitness test; passengers will be turned away at the Caldera Rim departure gate if the fitness test is not on file.

The minimum age for the Caldera Rim excursion is 18. This is the only activity in the Pelorus Voyages portfolio with an adult-only minimum.

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7. EVA and Excursion Requirements for Mars

Mars EVA briefing — a pre-excursion EVA suit fitting and briefing is mandatory for all passengers on their first Mars surface excursion. This takes approximately 45 minutes and covers suit operation, emergency depressurisation response, buddy-check protocol, and the Mars surface communications system. Passengers who completed EVA orientation at Moon Base 7 must still complete this separate Mars briefing — the Mars suit and operating environment are distinct enough that the Moon orientation does not substitute.

EVA suit return — all EVA suits must be returned and docked at Airlock Bay B before passengers can enter the airlock for departure processing. EVA suit return takes 10 to 15 minutes. Factor this into

excursion end time: if the Airlock Bay B muster deadline is 60 minutes before departure, you need to be out of your suit and at Bay B by that time — meaning you need to finish your excursion activity at least 75 minutes before departure.

Minimum age for Mars surface EVA excursions — 12 years old. Full EVA suit fitting is available from age 12.

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8. Planning Your Mars Stay

Three nights, five excursions — the five available excursions (Cydonia, Hellas, Terraforming, Olympus Mons, and the excursion planning session itself) cannot all be fitted into a three-night stay alongside the EVA briefing, the Olympus Fitness Test, and adequate rest days. Pelorus Voyages recommends planning for a maximum of three excursions in the three-night window.

Suggested prioritisation for Pathfinder passengers — book the Olympus Fitness Test on Sol 1 morning (arrival day). Schedule the Caldera Rim excursion for Sol 3. This leaves Sol 2 free for Cydonia and Hellas (both can be done on the same day with a full schedule), and the Terraforming tour can fill a morning on Sol 2 or Sol 3.

Suggested prioritisation for Navigator/Pioneer passengers — the Cydonia and Hellas excursions are the signature Mars experiences for non-Pathfinder passengers. The Terraforming tour is shorter and can complement either. The Hellas sunrise excursion requires a 0430 departure; passengers who want it should book it early and accept the early wake-up.

Muster deadline reminder — 60 minutes before departure, all EVA suits returned, at Airlock Bay B. Build 75 minutes from excursion end to departure window, not 60.

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