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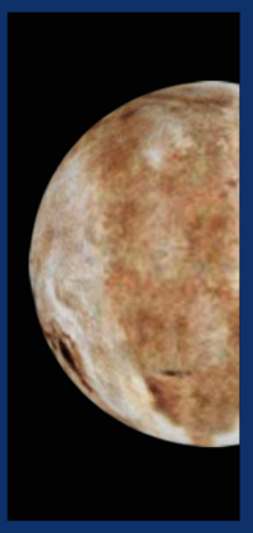
Summary Information Sheet

PLUTO/CHARON

Pluto is named after the Roman god of the underworld. It is the smallest major planet in the Solar System and has never been investigated by a spacecraft. It was discovered in 1930. Pluto's only known moon Charon is fairly close to it and about half its size. It is difficult to separate the bodies when viewed from Earth.

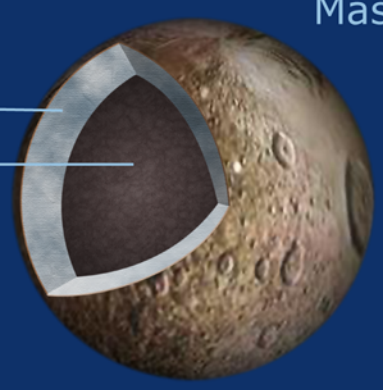


One revolution around the Sun lasts 247.7 Earth years

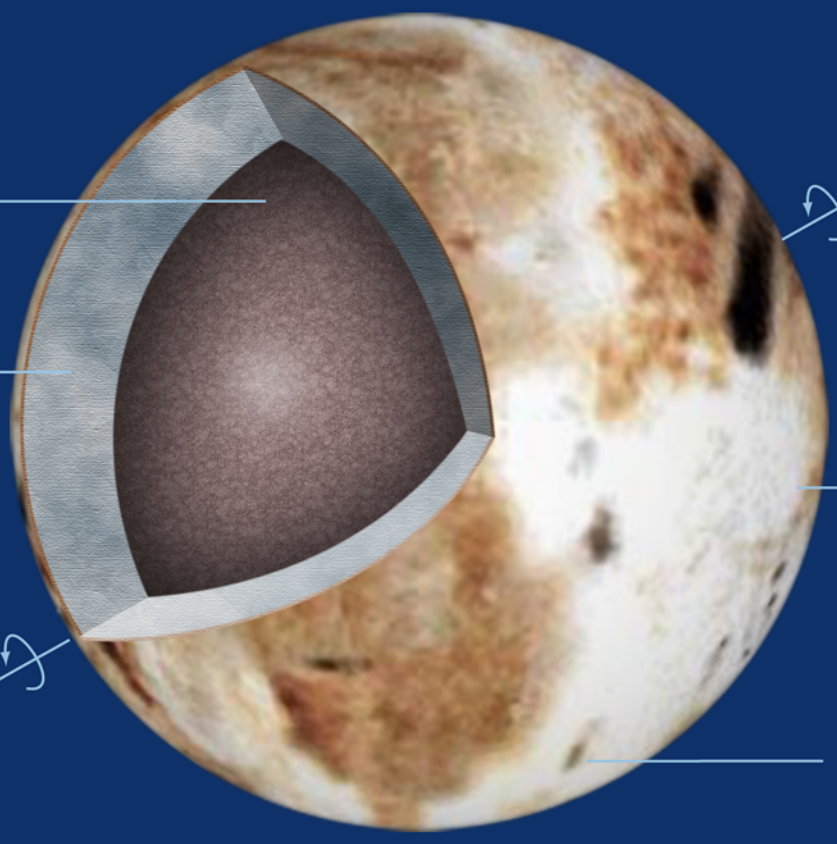
Mantle and surface of water ice

Rocky core

Charon
Radius: 590 km
Mass: 1.9×10^{22} kg



Distance from Pluto 19.700 km
One Revolution lasts 6.39 days



Rocky core

Icy mantle

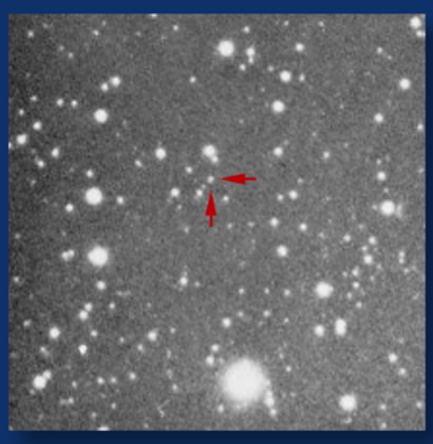
Inclination of the Equator to orbital plane 26°44'

Atmosphere of methane (probably mixed with nitrogen)

Surface of water ice and frozen methane

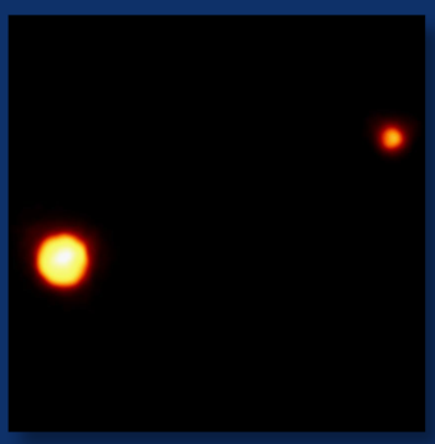
Pluto"s orbit is more tilted and more elongated than that of any other major planet

A section of Pluto"s orbit is closer to the Sun than Neptune's orbit. Thus, for some time, Neptune is the most distant major planet



The discovery of Pluto

Pluto's surface



Pluto and Charon

Pluto space art

Physical Data

Property	Pluto	Moon	Earth
Distance from the Sun	5966 million km	150 million km	150 million km
Rotation period	6 days 9 hrs 18 min	27 days 8 hrs	23 hrs 56 min
Equatorial radius	1195 km	1738 km	6378 km
Mass	1.3×10^{22} kg	7.35×10^{22} kg	5.97×10^{24} kg
Density	1100 kg/m^3	3340 kg/m^3	5520 kg/m^3
Satellites	1	--	1

For comparison

Images: ESO, ESA, NASA, except otherwise stated

Concept: B. Mackowiak