



Mars500 mission 'spacecraft' marks major milestone in its dry run to Mars

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An international crew of cosmonauts and astronauts aboard the Mars500 mission 'spacecraft' reached orbit around Mars on Thursday; thereby marking a significant milestone on a 520-day simulated journey to the Red [Planet](#) after months of virtual interplanetary flight.

According to the information [shared](#) by the European Space Agency (ESA), the Mars500 mission 'spacecraft' – which is actually a collection of sealed [habitats](#) in Moscow - entered a simulated orbit phase around the Red Planet on Tuesday, February 1. The ESA has further revealed that three of the spacecraft's six crewmembers – including three Russians, two Europeans and one Chinese - are set to "land" on Mars on February 12, with [the key](#) aim of making three deployments onto the simulated Martian landscape.

According to officials, the main objective of Mars500 - a \$15 [million](#) joint experiment by ESA, Russia and China – is to study the complex psychological and technical challenges which need to be solved for long spaceflights.

The project – essentially a dry run to Mars - has been underway for over eight months in a mock spacecraft at the Institute of Biomedical Problems in Moscow. Terming the Mars500 project as "a visionary experiment", Simonetta Di Pippo, ESA's director for [human](#) spaceflight, said in a statement: "Europe is getting ready to make a step further in space exploration: Our technology and our science grow stronger every day. Mars500 today is only an enriching simulation, but we are working to make it real."