



Mock Mission "Lands" on Mars

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Volunteer "astronauts" in a 500-day mock mission to Mars have "landed" on the surface of the Red [Planet](#), a major milestone in the project.

The Mars500 mission is a \$15 million project sponsored by the European Space Agency (ESA), China, and Russia. Since June, the all male six-person crew has been sealed in a mock space ship at the Institute of Biomedical Problems in Moscow in order to study the psychological effects and technical issues of such a long space journey. The crew is made up of two Russians, two Europeans, and a Chinese person, most of whom are doctors and engineers.

"This is the start of getting fundamental behavioral ecology data from long-duration confinement," David Dinges, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania conducting a study attached to Mars500, [told MSNBC](#). "It's a rare opportunity."

On Saturday, three of the crew members set foot on Mars, which is actually a large room in the institute outfitted with faux Martian rocks and dirt. They will spend 10 days on "Mars," and simulate three "Marswalks." The other three crew members will remain "in orbit." Mission control has communication glitches and emergency situations planned to gauge how astronauts would react.

"Mars500 is a visionary experiment," ESA's director for human spaceflight Simonetta Di Pippo [said in a Space.com report](#). "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."

Space.com said that the volunteer astronauts, who are actually getting paid about \$97,000 to participate in the year and a half long project, have routines similar to that of real spacemen. They work on maintenance jobs and experiments, exercise daily, and have two days off every week.

The Mars landing is the halfway point of the project, which will conclude in November.