

Space

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After eight months inside a cramped steel capsule, astronauts from the Mars 500 project have 'touched down' in a virtual landing on the red planet.

The simulated landing and walk on a fake Mars surface – in a hall at the Institute of Biomedical Problems in Moscow – was the highlight and halfway point in an ambitious isolation exercise.

Six astronauts from Russia, China and Europe 'blasted off' in June last year.

The experiment is designed to study the effects of isolation over the 520-day return trip to Mars.

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