



DATA SHEET

SOLAR SYSTEM: MERCURY

Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system and nearest to the Sun, Mercury is only slightly larger than our Moon.

If you were standing on the surface of Mercury, the Sun would appear more than three times as large as it does in the sky here on Earth, and the sunlight would be as much as seven times brighter. With Mercury being so close to the Sun, you'd think it was the hottest planet. Well you'd be wrong, that title belongs to nearby Venus, thanks to its dense atmosphere.

SOME FACTS ABOUT MERCURY

- 1 Mercury is just 0.4 Astronomical Units (AU) from the Sun. That's 58 million kilometres.
- 2 One day on Mercury (the time it takes for Mercury to rotate or spin once with respect to the stars) takes 59 Earth days.
- 3 One day-night cycle on Mercury takes 175.97 Earth days. Mercury makes a complete orbit around the Sun (a year in Mercury time) in just 88 Earth days.
- 4 In sunlight the surface of Mercury can rise to 740 K (470°C). In the dark the temperature can drop to 80 K (-190°C).
- 5 Mercury's thin atmosphere (exosphere), is composed mostly of oxygen, sodium, hydrogen, helium, and potassium. Atoms that are blasted off the surface by the solar wind and micrometeoroid impacts form the planet's exosphere.
- 6 It's mean density is: $5.4 \times 10^3 \text{ kg m}^{-3}$. This is almost as high as Earth's.
- 7 It's comparative volume is 0.05 (Earth = 1)