



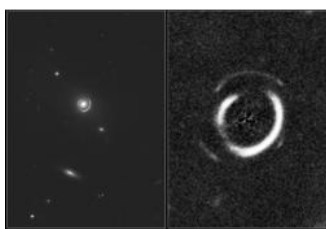
SPACE NEWS

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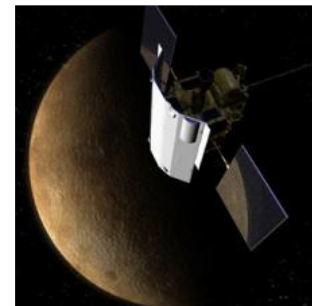
Last week in space

As galaxies rotate, their spiral arms usually sweep back, trailing behind the rotation of the galaxy. But astronomers have found a galaxy that defies this convention, with its arms opening outward in the same direction as the rotation of the galaxy's disk. The galaxy, known as NGC 4622, lies 200 million light years away in the constellation Centaurus. A team of American astronomers analyzed images of the galaxy, and discovered that it has a previously hidden inner counter clockwise pair of spiral arms. For more information, take a look here: <http://uanews.ua.edu/aneews2008/jan08/galaxy010808.htm>



NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has revealed a never-before-seen optical alignment in space: a pair of glowing rings, one nestled inside the other like a bull's-eye pattern. The double-ring pattern is caused by the complex bending of light from two distant galaxies strung directly behind a foreground massive galaxy, like three beads on a string. For more information, take a look here: <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2008/04/full/>

NASA will return to Mercury for the first time in almost 33 years on January 14, 2008, when the MESSENGER spacecraft makes its first flyby of the Sun's closest neighbour, capturing images of large portions of the planet never before seen. The probe will make its closest approach to Mercury at 2:04 p.m. EST that day, skimming 200 kilometres (124 miles) above its surface. This encounter will provide a critical gravity assist needed to keep the spacecraft on track for its 2011 orbit insertion around Mercury. For more information, take a look here: http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/news_room/status_report_01_10_08.html



Excitement is rising as ESA is in the final stages of preparation for the first collaborative space mission with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Chandrayaan-1 will study the Moon in great detail and be the first Indian scientific mission leaving the Earth's vicinity. Europe is supplying three instruments for the mission. For more information, take a look here: www.esa.int/esaSC/SEM6563MDAF_index_0.html

Not to be missed next week

Try spotting comet the International Space Station this week; details can be found here: www.heavens-above.com

Tuesday 15th January. Before sunrise, Venus can be seen in the same binocular field of view with either M9 (North of the planet) or M19 (South of the planet).

Wednesday 16th January: The asteroid 15 Eunomia (magnitude 8.2) can be found about 1° north of delta Gemini (magnitude 3.5) in the constellation of the Twins.

Saturday 19th January: Very close encounter of Saturn with the star SAO 99240 (magnitude 9.0) in the constellation of the Lion.