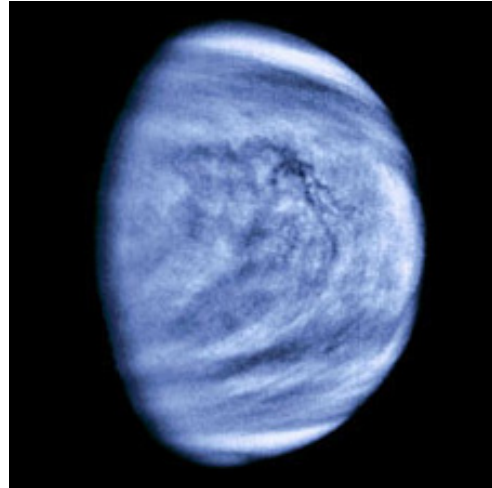


THIRD AND SECOND PLANETS FROM THE SUN



If we look quickly, we might think that these are two different pictures of our cloud-covered Earth, on different days from different distances in space. They aren't. **Earth** (on the left), was photographed from about 420 miles in orbit using satellite digital imaging, and our neighbor **Venus** (on the right) is how it appeared in ultraviolet light when photographed by NASA's Galileo spacecraft 1.7 million miles away in 1990. These 'sister' planets may appear similar, but they are dramatically different places.

Venus is approximately 67 million miles from the Sun while the Earth is 26 million miles further out, orbiting around 93 million miles from the Sun. [Comparison: The diameter of Venus is 12,100 miles whereas Earth is only slightly larger with a diameter of 12,756 miles; surface gravity is 0.90 of Earth; surface atmospheric pressure is 90 times greater than Earth's.] When photographed in the ultraviolet to emphasize cloud structure, Venus even looks somewhat like our own Earth. However, clouds in Earth's atmosphere rain droplets of water, whereas the clouds of Venus rain droplets of deadly sulphuric acid. If that isn't bad enough, Venus' temperature is about 850 degrees Fahrenheit (hot enough to melt some kinds of metals).



In this telescope photograph by Dan Lorraine of Rhode Island's *Skyscrapers*, Venus appears as a black dot during its 2004 transit across the Sun.

There are no meteorites knocked off the surface of Venus for you to hold in the Space Rocks collection; why?

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