

29 June 2005

Mars

We go somewhere that they say looks a lot like Mars and we meet some people who would love to go to the real place.

PATRICK EMMETT: From prehistoric times, mankind has been fascinated with [Mars](#). The closest planet to Earth and has spawned countless books and movies. One of these, 'Red Planet', was filmed near Coober Pedy in 2000.

And those barren landscapes are again drawing Martian devotees from around the world - this time it's the rugged hills around [Arkaroola](#).

JON CLARKE, MARS SOCIETY: [Aspects](#) of the landscape are very [Martian](#).

We have [dune fields](#) at Arkaroola and up in the Stezlecki Desert, we have [springs](#), we've got big outwash fans from the creeks in the Flinders Ranges, we've got [dry lakebeds](#), and all these features we have seen in images from Mars from orbiters and from rovers.

PATRICK EMMETT: Jon Clarke is a member of the Mars Society, a group of scientists from around the world [devoted](#) to putting humans on Mars.

JON CLARKE: In some ways we're very close. In some ways there's probably 10 to 20 years of testing and thinking that needs to be done before we're ready to go, but we need to start thinking about it if we want to go.

PATRICK EMMETT: The work at Arkaroola will build on experiments already conducted overseas. They'll be testing equipment and techniques for what is, by any estimates, an enormous and dangerous task.

In January, when [NASA](#) landed two [rovers](#) on the planet, it took them six months to get there.

It's [estimated](#) a human [mission](#) would take 2 and a half years in total.

Once on the ground, any Mars crew would have its work cut out getting around on a planet where gravity is around half what it is on Earth, and some mountain ranges are 24km high.

The expedition will be testing a new generation of spacesuits to make that easier.

PATRICK EMMETT: This new elasticised suit will be getting its first test at Arkaroola. It's more like a wetsuit than the traditional spacesuit. It weighs half as much, it's a lot more flexible, and it's a lot safer.

One of the main reasons why Mars creates so much interest is that it seems the planet most likely to have had life on it.

Even though its average temperature now is now -55 degrees Celsius, it used to be a lot warmer.

And there's evidence there may be water there.

JAMES WALDIE: The great scientific question is 'are we alone in the universe?'

Travelling to Mars, exploring Mars, may answer that question.

PATRICK EMMETT: Do you hope that one day you'll be wearing one of your suits on Mars?

JAMES WALDIE: I think that's the dream of all Mars Society people.

story notes

Mars

A planet in our solar system.

Words to do with space are the subject of today's spotlight.

Arkaroola

Arkaroola is in northern South Australia, in the outback.



aspects
features; parts

Martian
Martian here means from or like Mars.

Martian is usually used as a noun for fictional creatures from Mars.



dune fields
large areas covered with dry, hot sand dunes

springs
small, hot pools of water that come up from under the earth

dry lakebeds
lakes that have no water in them

devoted
If you are **devoted to** something, you are loyal or dedicated. You do it all the time.

NASA
North American Space Agency; the United States space organisation.

rovers
Rovers are machines designed to move around the planet, sending information back to scientists on earth.

estimated
guessed

mission
A **mission** is a group of people sent to do a certain task.
