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Opening extract from

See Inside Planet Earth

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Neptune

Uranus

Saturn is surrounded by rings of dust and rock

Jupiter is the largest planet in the solar system

Asteroids are large lumps of rock or metal that whizz around the Sun

Expert: Dr Julia Jones

Lecturer in Conservation Biology at the School of the Environment and Natural Resources, University of Wales, Bangor

A pair of binoculars under a flap means we've zoomed in for a closer look

Earth in space

Our Earth is one of eight planets that circle the Sun. Together they are known as the solar system. Life on Earth couldn't exist without the Sun's heat and light.

The Sun is a massive ball of exploding gas. It's far hotter than the hottest thing you can imagine.

The Sun is actually a medium-sized star

Distances in space are so vast, they are measured in light years. A light year is the distance light travels in a year – 95 trillion km or 6 trillion miles

There is evidence of water on Mars, which may mean there's life there too

Mars

Mercury

Mercury and Venus, the planets nearest the Sun, are VERY hot

Venus

It takes the Earth 365 days to travel around the Sun

Many stars are millions of light years away

The solar system is just a tiny part of a huge universe

Earth's moon

Earth

Many planets have moons spinning around them

The hottest stars are blue, the coldest ones are red, but they are all INCREDIBLY hot

A blanket of gases

We can live on Earth because it's surrounded by a blanket of gases, known as the atmosphere.

The Sun gives off an enormous amount of energy, including heat and light.

A shooting star

Energy from the Sun

More energy from the Sun

Further away from Earth, the atmosphere gets thinner until it fades away.

Shooting stars are actually rocks falling from space.

The atmosphere gives us air to breathe and water to drink.

An ultra-violet (UV) ray

A worried bird

A layer of gas, known as the ozone layer, absorbs harmful UV rays from the Sun.

The ozone layer

Heat from the Sun generates winds, ocean currents and all of our weather.

Under the hot Sun, water evaporates. It rises into the sky and turns into clouds of tiny water droplets.

Other planets have atmospheres too, but it would be almost impossible to live on them.

The International Space Station is a floating home for astronauts.

This satellite circles around the Earth collecting information about the weather.

A space shuttle takes astronauts to the space station.

The atmosphere contains gases, known as greenhouse gases, that help keep the Earth warm.

Without any greenhouse gases...

Carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane and water vapour are the main greenhouse gases.

The Earth's atmosphere is finely balanced. Any changes to this balance will make it harder to live on Earth.