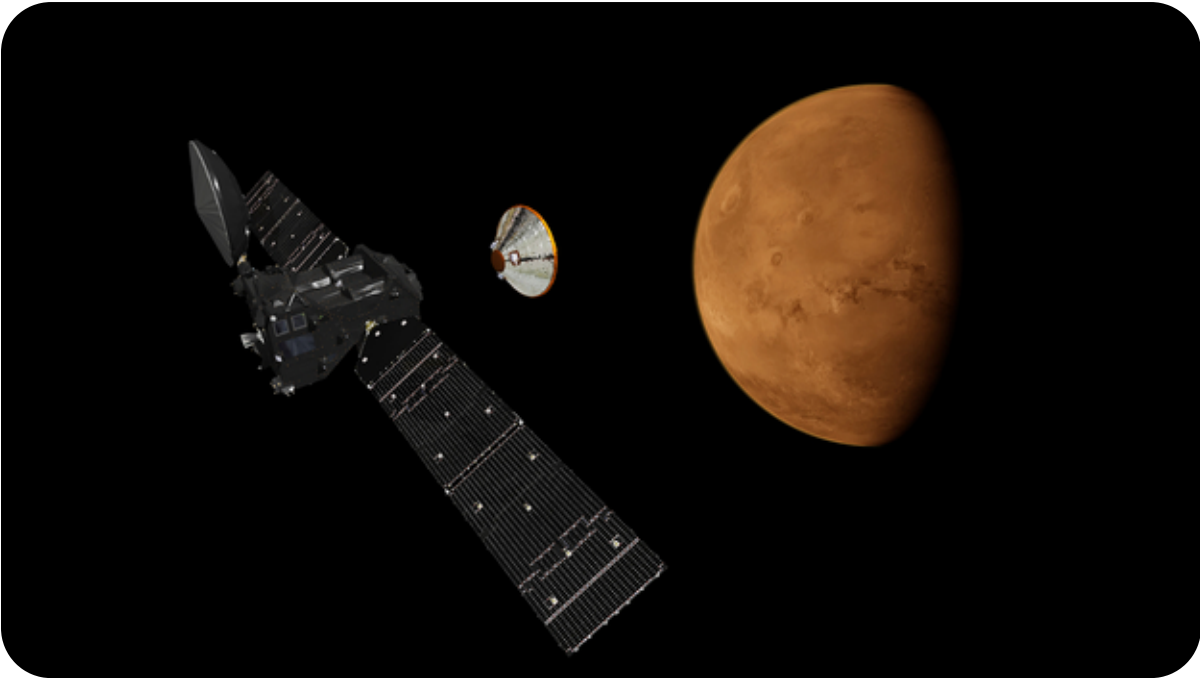


ESA’s ExoMars searches for alien life



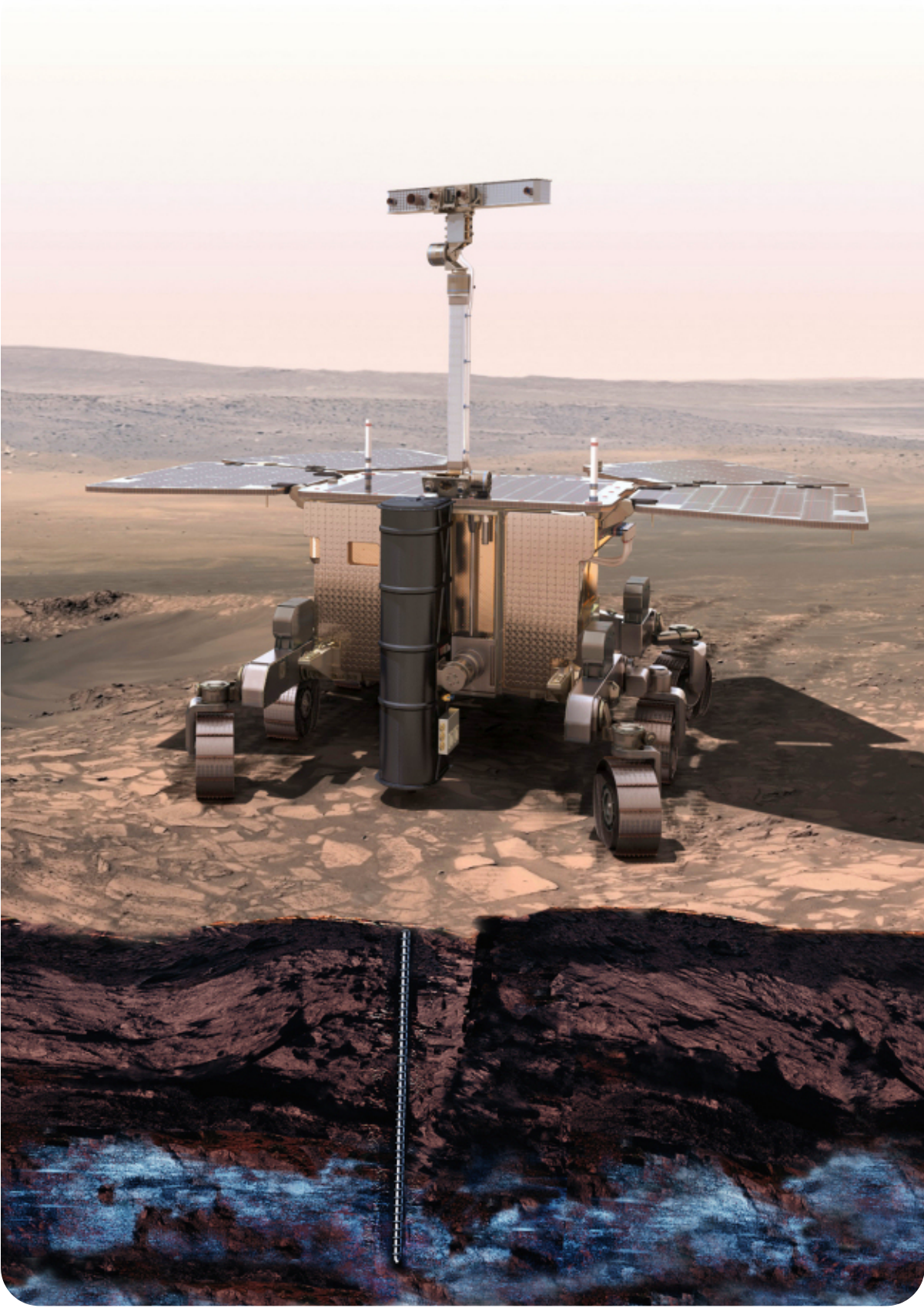
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03 March 2016

Have you ever wondered if life exists elsewhere in our Solar System? Many scientists think that the planet Mars could be home to simple forms of microbial life – the kinds of creatures that you need a microscope to see. Finding them would be one of the most important discoveries ever made, and ESA's ExoMars mission is going to try!

The first part of the ExoMars mission will launch in March 2016. A spacecraft called the Trace Gas Orbiter will fly around Mars and search for any chemicals that may have been produced by lifeforms. These will be strong clues as to where life could be found.

Meanwhile, a small probe called Schiaparelli will hurtle down to the surface of Mars and attempt to safely land. Schiaparelli is packed with sensors and equipment that will allow mission scientists to carefully study every moment of the landing. This will help engineers to make the next generation of Mars landers even better!



[Access the image](#)

The second part of the ExoMars mission will launch in 2018. A high-tech robot called the ExoMars Rover will use lessons learnt from the Schiaparelli probe to safely land on the surface. The ExoMars Rover will then search for areas that could be home to alien organisms.

One of the really special things about the ExoMars Rover is that it will be able to drill two metres below the surface in its search. That is far enough down so that life would be protected from the deadly radiation that hits the planet's surface. No other mission has been able to do this! The ExoMars Rover will send its data to the Trace Gas Orbiter, which will then relay this back to eager scientists on Earth.

A lot of people are very excited about the ExoMars mission as it gives us the best chance yet for finding life on Mars... if it is there. We won't have to wait too long to find out!

Cool fact: To make the ExoMars mission ESA teamed up with the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos).