

ABOUT THE COVER

Lava flows into the Pacific Ocean as the Milky Way shines down from above. Photographer Benjamin Van der Spek obtained this time exposure of lava erupting from the Kilauea volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii in August 2016. In the full picture below, three bright objects are visible in the sky near the top: Saturn (top), the star Antares (below to the left), and the planet Mars (below to the right). Mars may once have experienced similar phenomena billions of years ago, when its volcanoes were active and an ocean may have been present. Perhaps the same scene is playing out now countless times in the sky above, since we now know that most stars have planets, and that many are likely to be terrestrial in nature with orbits that allow liquid water.



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