

Mercury



This photomosaic of Mercury is composed of images taken by the Mariner 10 as it flew by the planet after the first encounter in March 1974. The image shows the Caloris basin at the left of the terminator surrounded and filled by younger smooth plains deposits. This 1,300 km diameter impact basin formed about 4 billion years ago when a large asteroid or comet struck Mercury. The smooth plains resemble the lunar maria, the smooth, dark lava plains that are concentrated on the Moon's near side. However, the Mercurian plains display less contrast in reflectivity with heavily cratered terrain shown on the right, top and bottom than is seen between the lunar maria (dark) and the lunar highland (light). (Courtesy of NASA)