

Characteristics of Terrestrial Planets

John Chambers
Carnegie Institution for Science

The Solar System is blessed with four highly diverse terrestrial planets together with the Moon and Vesta which share a number of characteristics with these planets. These objects vary considerably from one another, but they all clearly belong to a different category than the giant planets of the outer Solar System. In this talk, I will review what we currently know about terrestrial planets, such as their masses, orbits, compositions, interior structures, atmospheres and oceans. I will look at the similarities and differences between the terrestrial planets in the Solar System, and compare these worlds with planets generated in computer simulations of planet formation. Finally, I will briefly consider what other kinds of terrestrial planet might exist in the universe that are not found in the Solar System.