



PHOTOS: NASA/JPL-CALTECH/UCLA/MPS/DLR/IDA/WWU

# DOUBLE TAKE

---

*MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE  
FOR SOLAR SYSTEM RESEARCH*

The bizarre landscape seen in the photo is literally not of this world. Rather, the image shows the central area of the Occator crater on Ceres – a dwarf planet with a diameter of around 950 kilometers. Seen in full view on the left, Ceres was and may still be the scene of cryovolcanic activity in which saline solution rose from the interior and the water evaporated to leave behind bright deposits. Within Occator, the images from the unmanned Nasa space probe Dawn additionally revealed a 340-meter-high dome that is also covered in salt deposits. This “snow-covered” region looks particularly realistic in the 3D reconstruction. Models like this help to shed light on the geology and developmental history of the crater, which measures some 92 kilometers across. One essential element was Dawn’s on-board scientific camera system, which was supplied by the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research in Goettingen. Although the mission officially ended in 2018, the researchers are still analyzing the data today. They even recently detected organic compounds in another crater, known as Urvara.

53

