

OUR COSMIC NEIGHBORHOOD

A 4.5-billion-year-old journey through the Solar System.



The Solar System is more than just eight planets circling a star. It is a "bubble" of gravity and wind traveling through space at 515,000 mph (828,000 kph). From the furnace of the Sun to the icy debris of the Oort Cloud, this is a tour of our home in the galaxy.

CITY: Milky Way Galaxy
(100,000+ light-years across)

DISTRICT: Orion Spur

Galactic Center



YOUR GALACTIC ADDRESS

- Coordinates: **26,000 light-years** from the center.



Orbit Time: **230 million years** (One "Galactic Year").



Context: We are moving! Gravity keeps our planets bound to the Sun while the **Sun races around the galaxy**.

THE GREAT COLLAPSE

1. The Collapse (4.6 Billion Years Ago)



2. The Solar Nebula



Timeline of Birth:

- **4.6 Billion Years Ago:** A giant cloud of gas and dust collapsed, possibly triggered by a supernova shockwave.
- **The Solar Nebula:** As it collapsed, it spun faster and flattened into a disk—like pizza dough spinning in the air.
- **Accretion:** Dust grains clumped into rocks, then planetesimals, and finally planets.

Key Insight:
We are made of stardust. The atoms in your body came from debris left by ancient stars.

THE POWERHOUSE

99.86%

of the Solar System's total mass is in the Sun.



The Anchor: The Sun's gravity dominates everything. It holds all planets, asteroids, and comets in their orbits.

The Engine: A 'Yellow Dwarf' star that fuses hydrogen into helium. This nuclear fusion creates the energy that lights our world.

Analogy: If the Solar System were a bucket of water, the planets would be just a teaspoon; the Sun is the rest of the bucket.

- Earth (to scale)

THE ROCK STARS (TERRESTRIAL PLANETS)



Why are they rocky? When the system formed, it was **too hot** near the Sun for gas and ice to survive. Only **metal** and **rock** could handle the heat.

Mercury: The smallest, closest to the **heat**.

Venus: The greenhouse world. Thick atmosphere traps **heat**.

Earth: The 'Goldilocks' zone. Liquid water allows **life**.

Mars: The rusty world. Signs of ancient **water**.

THE GREAT DIVIDE: THE FROST LINE



Inside the Line:
Too hot for ice.
Planets are rocky
and small.

Outside the Line:
Cold enough for water, methane,
and ammonia to freeze.
Planets grow massive.

**THE
FROST
LINE**



Spotlight: CERES
The largest object in the
asteroid belt and the only
Dwarf Planet in the inner
solar system.

THE GAS GIANTS

Past the Frost Line, ice cores grew massive enough to capture hydrogen and helium gas, swelling into giants.

JUPITER: *The King.* Could fit 1,000 Earths inside. Pressure is so high that deep inside, hydrogen turns into a metal.

SATURN: *The Ring Master.* Rings are made of billions of chunks of water ice, ranging from dust-sized to house-sized.

THE ICE GIANTS

Comparison: Unlike Jupiter and Saturn (mostly gas), these two contain heavier ‘ices’—a hot, dense fluid of water, methane, and ammonia.

URANUS: The Tilted Planet.

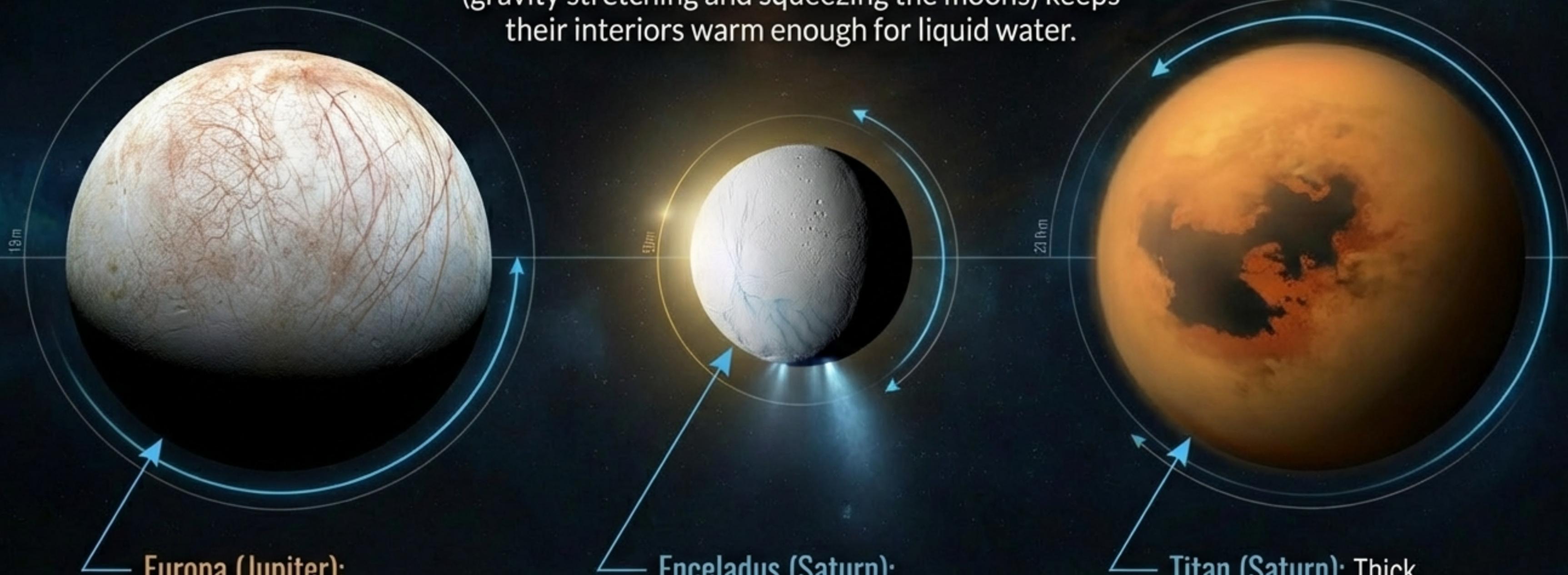
Rotates on its side (98° tilt), likely knocked over by a massive collision long ago.

NEPTUNE: The Windy Planet.

The furthest major planet, featuring supersonic winds and active weather systems.

THE SEARCH FOR LIFE: OCEAN WORLDS

Habitable zones aren't just around stars. 'Tidal Heating' (gravity stretching and squeezing the moons) keeps their interiors warm enough for liquid water.



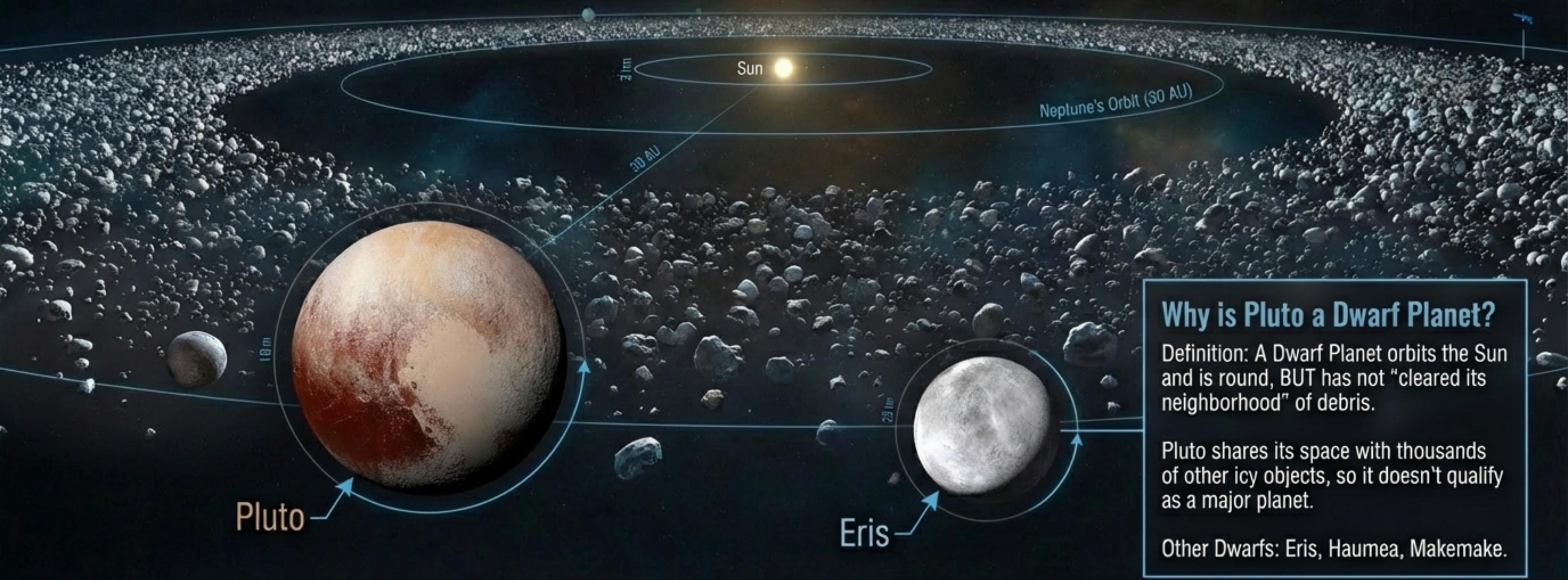
Europa (Jupiter):
A global ocean hidden
beneath a thick crust of ice.

Enceladus (Saturn):
Shoots geysers of water ice
and organics into space.

Titan (Saturn): Thick
atmosphere and lakes
of liquid methane.

THE THIRD ZONE: THE KUIPER BELT

A region beyond Neptune (30–50 AU) filled with icy bodies left over from the solar system's formation.



THE BUBBLE AND THE SHELL

The Heliosphere:
The Sun blows a constant wind of particles. This creates a bubble that shields us from galactic radiation. The edge is the “Heliopause”.

A diagram showing the Sun at the center of the Solar System, which is enclosed by a translucent blue sphere labeled "Heliosphere (Solar Wind Bubble)". This sphere is surrounded by a large, wispy, white-particle cloud labeled "Oort Cloud". Two arrows point from the text descriptions to these respective features.

Heliosphere
(Solar Wind Bubble)

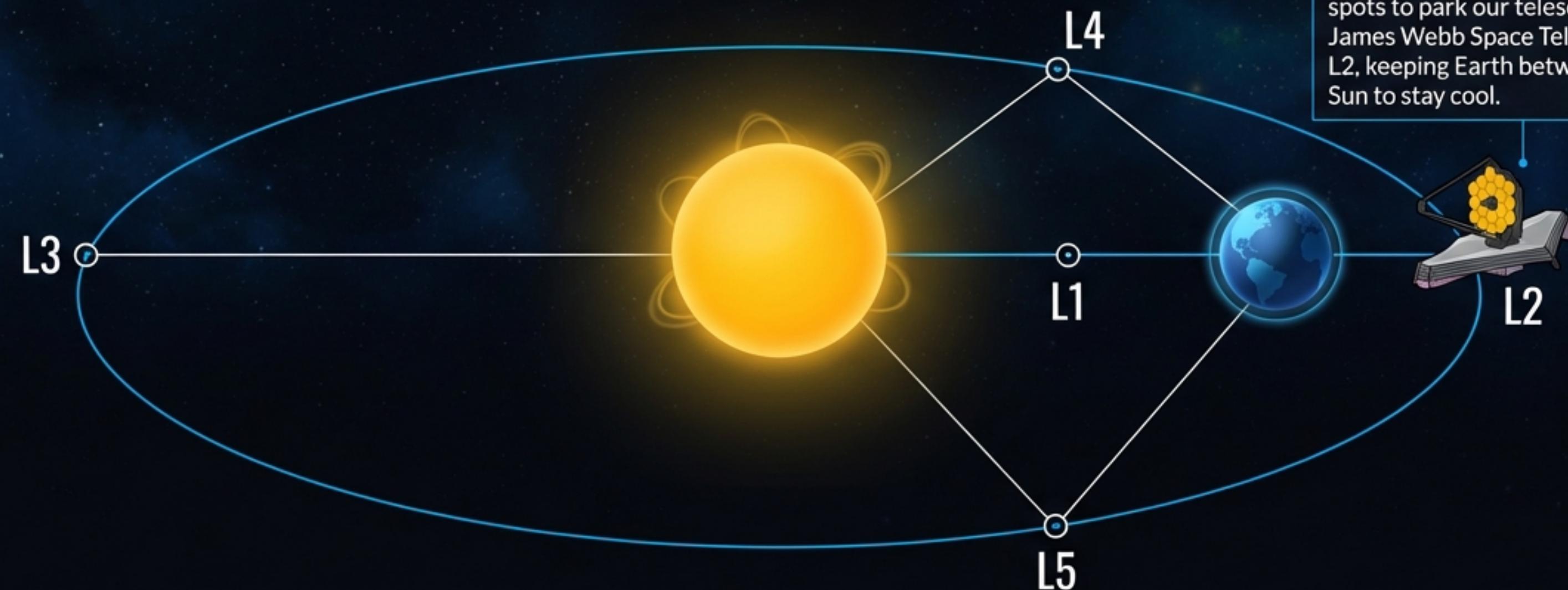
Solar System

The Oort Cloud:
A theoretical shell up to 100,000 AU away. It is the deep freeze home of long-period comets.

THE INVISIBLE WEB

Gravity is the glue of the universe. It pulls on everything.

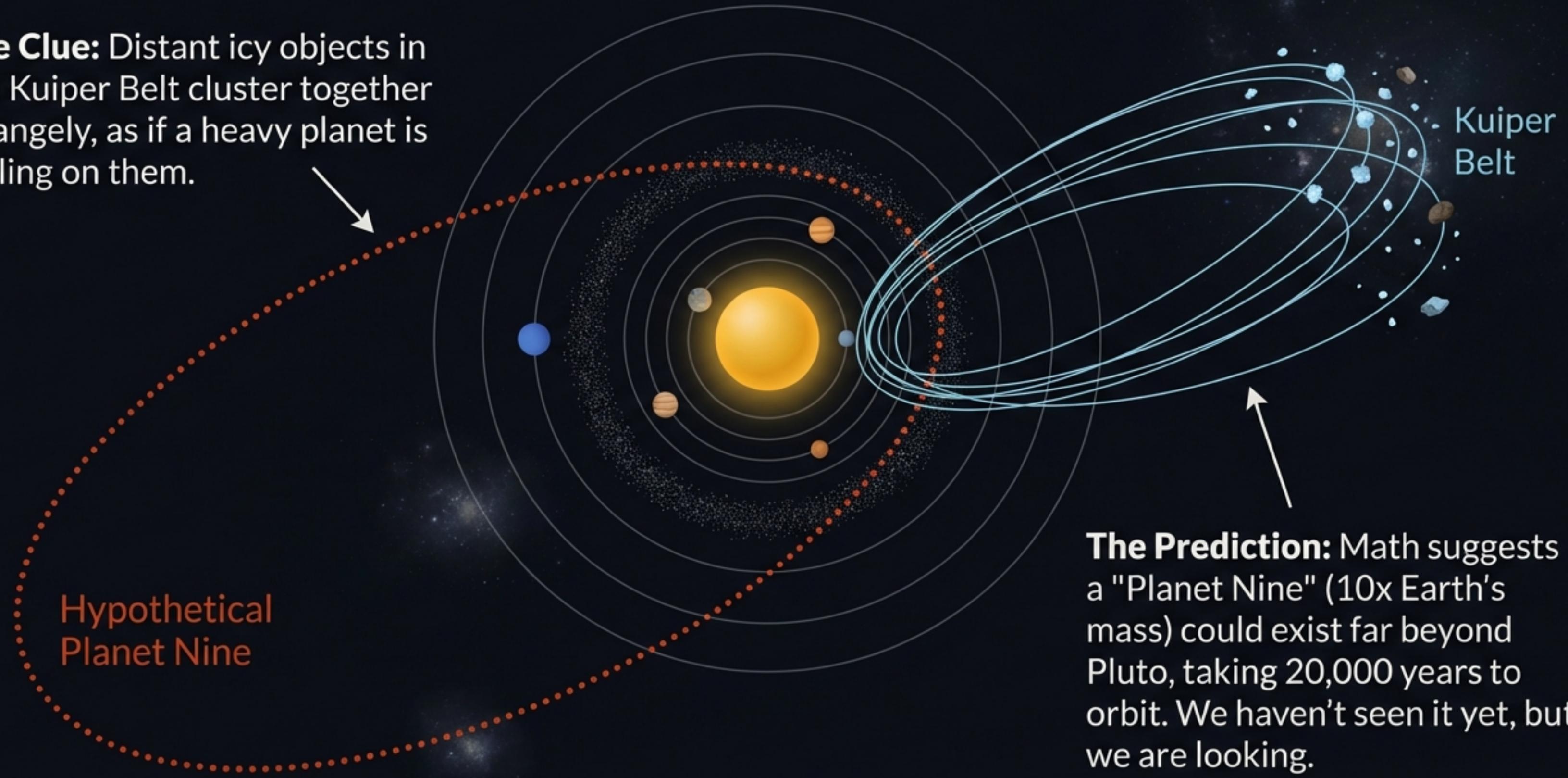
Lagrange Points: Special spots in space where the gravity of the Sun and Earth balance out perfectly.



Parking Spots: We use these stable spots to park our telescopes. The James Webb Space Telescope sits at L2, keeping Earth between it and the Sun to stay cool.

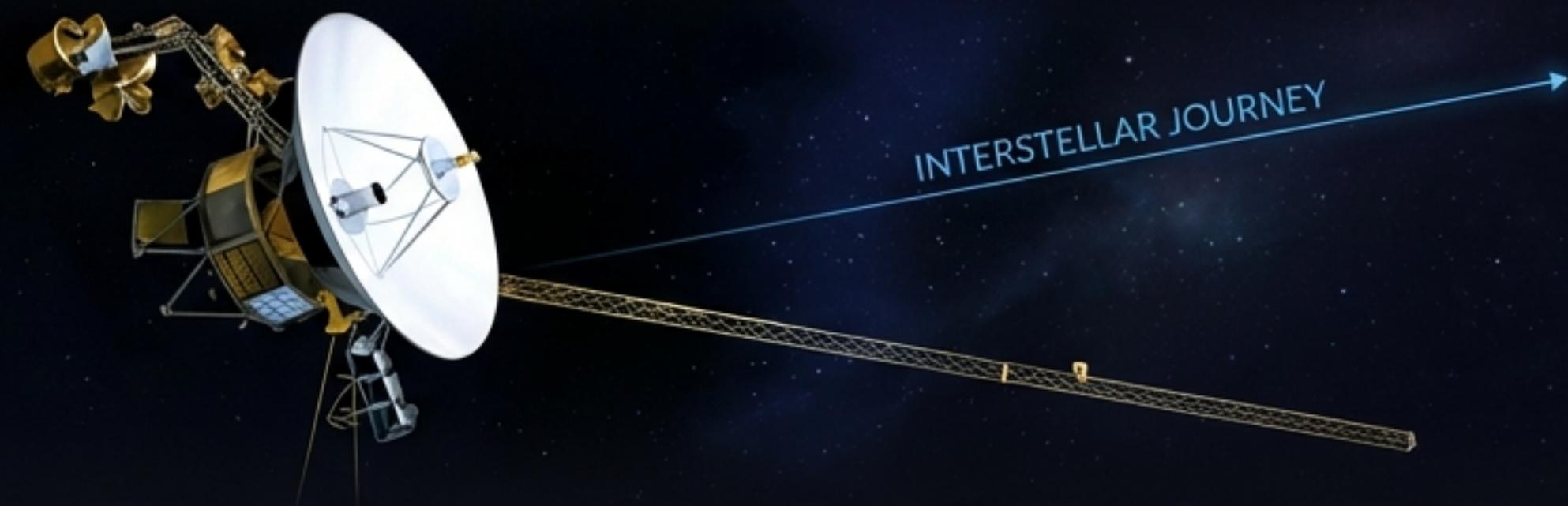
MYSTERY OF OF THE NINTH PLANET

The Clue: Distant icy objects in the Kuiper Belt cluster together strangely, as if a heavy planet is pulling on them.



The Prediction: Math suggests a "Planet Nine" (10x Earth's mass) could exist far beyond Pluto, taking 20,000 years to orbit. We haven't seen it yet, but we are looking.

OUR MECHANICAL ENVOYS



Voyager 1 & 2 (1977): The only human-made objects to enter interstellar space. They carry the **Golden Record** greeting.



The Future: **Europa Clipper** is launching to study Jupiter's icy moon for signs of life. The **Artemis program** will return humans to the Moon to prepare for **Mars**.

A TINY SPECK IN THE DARK

“The solar system is our
backyard, and we are just
opening the gate.”



Our Solar System is a complex machine of gravity and energy. From the fiery Sun to the frozen Oort Cloud, it is vast and ancient. And right now, Earth is the only known home for life in all of it.