



"Life is not measured by how many breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away. - Unknown

Mars - Close and Personal



At 2:51 a.m. PDT on Aug. 27, 2003, Mars will be within 34,646,418 miles (55,758,006 kilometers) of Earth. This will be the closest that Mars has come to our planet in nearly 60,000 years (the calculations vary up to 74,000 years). This is called a perigee, which means close to Earth.

Earth and Mars both have an elliptical orbit around the Sun. These paths actually rotate through space over thousands of years. Thus, the relationship in space between Earth and Mars is never exactly repeated.

On Aug. 28, 2003, Mars will be at "opposition", the moment when the Sun, Earth and Mars form a straight line; since we are closer to the Sun than Mars, this is also when we are overtaking Mars in our respective orbits.

Mars comes to opposition about every 26 months (this is also the interval between the retrograde periods). But because of the elliptical orbits of Earth and Mars, not all oppositions are created equal. The 2003 opposition will be superior to all the others because Mars will be very near to its closest point to the Sun, called a perihelion, when it arrives at opposition.

These oppositions of Mars at perihelion occur about every 15 to 17 years. Astrologically, this is when the cycle through the twelve signs of the zodiac repeats. It is also referred to as the radical return of Mars, which is given as 15 years in traditional astrological texts. The most recent one took place in September 1988, when Mars passed to within 36.5 million miles (58.7 million kilometers) of Earth.

Though Mars' opposition takes place on Aug. 28, it will be closest to Earth on Aug. 27. The astrological opposition occurs at 10:59 (A.M.) – see chart (24:00 hour clock used on this site). At the close approach, the Red Planet will be brighter than Jupiter and all the stars in the night sky, outshone only by Venus and the Moon. Note that there is a New Moon on the 27th of August, which naturally is the time Moon is not visible. Venus is too close to the Sun to be visible in the evening sky until early September. Mars is the brightest object in the sky his evening start phase officially starts August 28, as he becomes an evening star. Mars offers plenty of photo opportunities as he rises around 22:00 local daylight time each night, and is visible all night long on the 27th.

At the opposition Mars will be visible throughout the night. The New Moon of August 27 will not outshine Mars until she waxes visible. Venus became an evening star on August 18, and will be brighter than Mars once she emerges visible later in September. She is

too close to the Sun for us to see her. Get your cameras ready, as it will be midway the 23rd century before Mars is even more spectacular.

More information is available at www.space.com. There are some spectacular images on their web-site plus many others.. I have attached a PDF article, which gives you more astronomy behind this spectacular event.

The Astrology behind Mars Retrograde

Sun opposition Mars is a phenomenon that occurs when Mars is retrograde. These alignments take place every 26 months. Around this time Mars spends six months in the sign of its retrogradation. The 20 remaining months in the cycle are divided quite equitably between the other eleven zodiacal signs (approx. 55 days per sign). At the conjunction Mars starts his evening star phase, astronomically a few weeks prior to it. The morning star phase began about 13 months prior when Mars was conjunct the Sun (August 2002). The retrograde period ranges from 61 days to 76 days; average being 67.

We know that the slow-moving planets relate to bigger changes and events. The astronomy behind the motion is actually to do with easterly and westerly movement. (For more detailed information check out www.space.com).

In real life if we get a houseguest, who stays on longer than planned, we get to know that person far too well. We learn about their flaws in addition to the nice characteristics that initially attracted us to them. Astrologically speaking, consider Mars, an aggressive, probing guest, who will indeed stay beyond his planned departure date.

Retrograde planets are physically closer to earth than direct motion planets, so the impact is felt more pronouncedly. Retrograde planets in the natal charts are typically associated to be more introverted, internalized and responses with words (Mercury), feelings (Venus) and actions (Mars) delayed or withheld.

Natal charts, however, are unique to individuals. In a natal chart Mars retrograde for example describes inherent behaviour and the way the person does things. With a retrograde Mars we expect hesitation, caution and reluctance to act in haste to be a part of the person's make up. The environment and upbringing of the person would have helped mould this type of behaviour.

Transit Mars, currently retrograde, influences the natal patterns and further has a universal influence. This tends to be quite contrary to the natal influence. Frustration levels rise as we encounter people and situations we cannot force to move ahead. Little things that annoy us in the way others behave appear as if under a magnifying glass - blown out of all proportion. We lash out and react rather than calmly respond.

Mars moved into Pisces on the 16th of June to keep company to Uranus who started a new seven years cycle in March. Mars turned retrograde on July 28 Mars will stationing at 10 Pisces. Mars will not change signs until December 16, 2003 - so we have Mars in the same sign for six months! The first 10° of Pisces will be 'activated' three times, which is the typical retrograde theme. This theme, astrologically speaking, is readily related to the fact that things happen in threes!

Last year we experienced Venus in Scorpio for four months and that felt like eternity (Sept. 7, 2002 - January 7, 2003). Mars represents more forceful energy and even the time frame is 50% longer. The signs Mars has natural affinity with are Aries, Scorpio and Capricorn; thus people with Mars or significant planetary placements in these signs will likely be the most frustrated when the brakes are pulled and action/activity slows down to a crawl; more specifically, we may feel that we are in fact moving backward. Two steps forward and three steps back!

Now before I repeat my social commentary thoughts from earlier this year let's just take a quick look at the typical Mars Retrograde influences.

"Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy ride!" - a famous line delivered by the red-haired Bette Davies. Red hair is, of course, associated with Mars.

Mars is impatient, masculine energy linked to vehicles and machinery through the motors; to tools and instruments through the fact that it rules iron. People tend to be more accident prone when Mars is moving against the grain. I write weekly horoscopes, and during these times lace it with advice - heads up, stay alert in traffic, watch your step, don't rush, and stay cautious around machinery. Ironically everyone in my family has had a little incident since July 29. My son fell and threw his back out, while not paying attention. I landed on my "fanny" while walking too briskly across a slippery deck, and have the bruises to prove it. Another one of my sons nicked a piece of his thumb off using a saw. My husband fell of the ladder while using a hedge trimmer. You get the picture. So pay attention.

Another popular theme is that the world is appears to be moving at a slow pace. No one is willing to act too fast other than what is listed in the previous paragraph. We tend to get frustrated when we cannot initiate action or when it becomes painfully slow to get anything done. It is as if we are bugs caught on flypaper. One reason I can think about behind this period, is that we need to relearn how to do things better. Perhaps something we skipped in the past, and learn to do it right.

What is wonderful activity to help alleviate the tension during these times, is to actually work with tools and machinery, with due care of course. I have spent two days pressure washing rugs. It is almost like holding a gun (the nozzle does look like one) and just beat the dirt out from within the fibers. Some years I have opted to knit up a storm, and have several sweaters to prove the fact. Metal tools and/or motorized equipment is what I am talking about. Baking can be productive as well, if it is dough you knead with all your might. All of the preceding 'jobs' are more productive than venting your anger at the first person who strokes your fur in the wrong direction.

Incidentally, Mars was last retrograde in Pisces in 1956, and Elvis Presley's "Don't be Cruel" was released. The Suez Crisis of 1956 is viewed as the start of the fall of the imperial empire. Hungary had the uprising against the Communist regime. In 1956 Jupiter was in Virgo, as will be the case this year as well. The year 1956 has been coined as the year of protest. This year in British Columbia we have seen dozens of recall campaigns launched to unseat liberal politicians. There are class action lawsuits against a tobacco company and doctors have launched an action against our health care system for the benefit of the recipients of care. The last item is more in keeping with the Pisces theme perhaps, although cigarettes are an addictive substance and thus belong to the nebulous realm of Pisces.

The slower moving planets tend to cause more change. Pisces is the sign that represents trade unions, hospitals, the masses and our collective psyche and collective guilt. It is the last sign of the zodiac ending the twelve-fold cycle. In terms of Mars it is the hidden world behind the activity and action. Pisces is the 12th house for Aries, which is the natural home of Mars. While we will see a lot of activity in the world, in terms of our personal lives this period has the feel of undertones, at times difficult to pin point type of action. This can catch us unaware and unprepared.

We associate Pisces with the masses, unions, groups and backbenchers and while Mars of action spends such a long time travelling through this sign, we are likely to experience a lot of unrest. Real unemployment figures are always higher than those revealed by statistics, we will be introduced to the reality and how it is affecting our society. Discontent and insecurity will become more pronounced as people struggle with the changing landscape of the workforce, and their place in it or the lack of it.

Aries

For six months starting June 16th Mars moves to live in your 12th solar house. This area represents our inner life, innate fears and insecurities, it may create a desire to withdraw from the 'rat-race'. Our dream life tends to become vivid with this influence, and as we are looking at six months might as well learn about the symbolism of dreams, take up meditation or other similar activity that allows the mind to become focused on the invisible side of life. The dilemma with this time frame is that world refuses to leave us alone, and the demands on your time and effort seem to increase. Pick your activities wisely. Physically this can bring about a period where energy levels are at a low, or you may even experience illness. 12th house does represent hospitals.

Taurus

Until the 16th of June the theme of working at career, climbing that corporate ladder or releasing it continues. Family support continues strong, but you may feel a little backed against the wall. Do trust your instincts about when the time is right. After the 16th of June the theme becomes income and rewards from career type activity, and this lasts for six months. In life we get the rewards we have earned, and it isn't always smooth sailing.

Gemini

Feel the breeze in your hair, inhale the scents of nature, drink from the fountain of life. Mars moves from the planning to the action stage on the 16th of June. Time to get those ducks in order until then, hone your plans and decide which route to take. Career gets a welcome boost. The influence lingers for six months with some ups and downs along the way. Such is life anyway. August-September is the time to lay low and keep your nose to the grindstone on the work front.

Cancer

Mars is lending strength of conviction and additional energy and stamina into your life and to the self starting June 16. The house involved is the 9th and we may be looking at learning new skills, starting at college or similar. Typically we travel more when the action planet stirs the energy of this long-distance travel house.

Leo

Mars moves out of the relationship sector of your chart into the money and resources sector. Initially, you may feel overly focused on what you don't have. Mars stays in this area of your life for six months. It is a time to become more resourceful, to learn to count your blessings and to work in cooperation with your partner. Sexual energy increases and with it your energy to extend extra effort in other areas of your life. It is a house of renovation and rejuvenation. We can talk about physical property needing repairs or our body needing extra attention.

Virgo

Mars moves to oppose your Sun on June 16 easing up on the busy-ness at work and with those never-ending, ever-changing chores, routines and schedules. Relationships start taking up more of your attention, effort and energy. Don't be terribly surprised if you also have deal with more than your fair share of difficult to handle individuals. Energy levels tend to fluctuate from one extreme to the other, and you will need to learn to accommodate these changing levels.

Libra

Mars may be responsible for the hard work for the six month period starting June 16. Time to reorganize your schedules and prioritize your obligations. You had your playtime and now it is time to get serious. This can be the time frame when co-workers become a bigger part of your life, issues/problems and all. You are typically a creative type of problem solver, which skill will now be tested. Do take your safety seriously during this time, look up to avoid walking into things.

Scorpio

Mars moves out of the area representing home, children and family, and into the creative and romantic sector of your chart. The affairs at home enter a calmer phase, children's activities and affairs still linger on but with lesser demands. After the 16th you get six months of working with projects that require creative thinking, and inspiration. You could simply just be busy helping with children's sporting team or similar enterprise. Supportive energy, with the exception of those 2+ months in August-September which bring in some disruptions. Energy levels climb a tad higher for these six months and you also get to play and have some fun!

Sagittarius

The Mars effect, energy, effort and disruptions, is felt in the area of home, family and around the house generally. Renovations and refurbishing can become the big theme at home, and so can being the one who is to host those family reunions. Pay attention to plumbing, ensuring taps are turned off, etc. Dealing with family members can be a bit challenging, take deep breaths and stay calm.

Capricorn

Mars enters the third house increasing the pace of life. Isn't life funny that way, schedules ease up in one area and pick up pace in another. You've already felt this shift when Uranus made this area of your life his residence for seven years starting March 10. Initially there can be disruptions in your daily routines, in the longer term we quickly get used to the ups and downs of life. You may find yourself travelling more, attending classes and seminars or even venturing out to teach others. During this time your neighbourhood expands as you become more involved within your community. Temptation to sign up for too much is particularly strong, so watch yourself when you are tempted to respond with a 'why not, I can do that'.

Aquarius

Mars leaves your Sun sign and solar first house, and takes up residence in your money sector. This can result in unexpected expenditures, so it may help to stay cautious with purchases. On an emotional level this marks a time frame when we tend to assess our non-monetary worth and value. You have made subtle and not so subtle changes to your approach and attitude, some willingly and others fighting all the way. Now it is time to assess if who you have become is in line with who you believe you truly are. (Uranus is already in this sector, since March 10, and Mars is the reinforcement officer, so to speak.)

Pisces

"Love is like a butterfly . . ." Mars makes an entrance into your Sun sign, energy levels soar there is a spring in your step, you feel alive! When we glow, others tend to notice us more, the attention is on you for quite a while. This same energy can make you assertive or simply aggressive, so watch out for that. And heads up, accidents happen when we don't pay attention to where we are going or what we are doing.

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