

# Missions set to launch to Red Planet

**Two Mars-bound spacecraft launched by NASA this year won't solve the mystery of whether ancient life existed on Mars, but they will help determine where to look for answers**

The **Mars Pathfinder** will land at the mouth of a giant channel where rocks from ancient highlands – the same age as the 3.6 billion-year-old Mars meteorite – are believed to have been deposited by floods

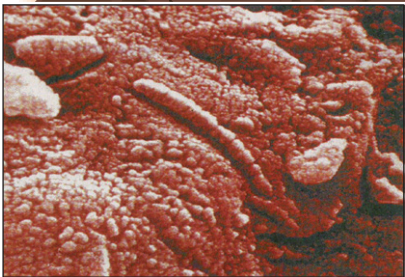
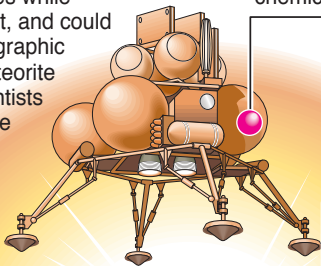
## Mars Surveyor programme

**Nov 1996: Mars Global Surveyor**, scheduled for November liftoff, will map geological features while orbiting the planet, and could help find the geographic source of the meteorite that's giving scientists hope that primitive life once existed on Mars

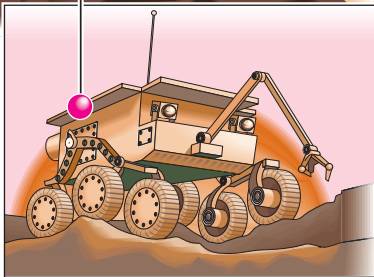
**Dec 1996: Mars Pathfinder** will carry a small rover designed to nose up to Martian rocks and analyze their chemical composition

## 'Pint-sized' geologist

Shoebox-sized rover, controlled from Earth, records images and collects up to 2.5kg of pebbles, rock chips, soil and dust



**Apparent microfossil – 3.6 billion-years-old**



Source: NASA/JPL

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