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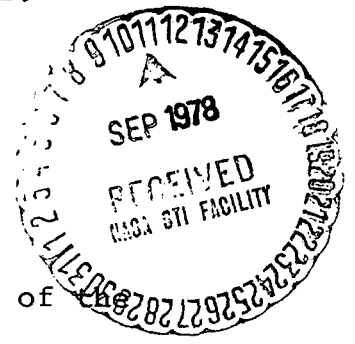
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VOYAGER LEAVES ASTEROID BELT



NASA's Voyager 1 has completed its transit of
asteroid belt, leaving the region Sept. 8 on its journey
to Jupiter and Saturn. Voyager 2 will exit on Oct. 21.

The asteroid belt is a band of rock and dust
360 million kilometers (223 million miles) wide between
the orbits of Mars and Jupiter; its inner edge begins
about 105 million km (65 million mi.) from Earth's
orbit. At one time scientists believed the belt might
constitute an impassable hazard for spacecraft bound
for the outer planets and beyond.

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ASTEROID BELT (National Aeronautics and
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Voyager 1 entered the asteroid belt last Dec. 10, a few hours behind Voyager 2. Voyager 1, launched after Voyager 2, has been flying a faster trajectory, and has been steadily pulling ahead of its companion since overtaking it last Dec. 15.

Voyager 1's speed relative to the Sun is 57,400 kilometers per hour (35,700 miles per hour). When it leaves the asteroid belt on Oct. 21, Voyager 2's speed relative to the Sun will be 49,400 km/h (30,700 mph).

Voyager 1 will reach its closest approach to Jupiter March 5, 1979, when it will pass 286,000 km (178,000 mi.) from the giant planet. Voyager 2 will pass 643,000 km (399,000 mi.) from Jupiter on July 1979.

Both spacecraft will continue on to the ringed-planet Saturn. Voyager 1 will arrive in November 1980, flying within 2,500 miles of the surface of Saturn's largest satellite, Titan. Voyager 2 will arrive at Saturn in August 1981. Voyager 2 has the option of continuing on to a January 1986 encounter with the planet Uranus.

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Voyager 2 was launched from Cape Kennedy, Fla., Aug. 20, 1977. Voyager 1 was launched Sept. 5, 1977.

The Voyager project is managed for NASA's Office of Space Science by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. JPL is a government-owned facility operated for NASA by the California Institute of Technology.

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