





S1 - 19. COMETS, ARCHIVES OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM

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While they circle the sun, comets are sowing grains of dust. When these dust specks burn up in our atmosphere they create meteor showers.
In the sky of the Sierra Nevada, these messengers from the depths of our origins offer quite a show. At the summit of Pico Veletta, Serge Brunier enjoys watching the trail left behind by comet Ison. The astronomers here are studying this ball of ice in all its glory, the chemical composition of its atmosphere or coma as well as the huge trails of dust and gas that form the tail of this ephemeral star.
Comets are of particular interest to scientists, because they are the memory of the solar system. These are primitive objects that existed long before the earth and other planets - they are archives that have remained intact and contain all the ingredients of the cloud of gas and dust at the origins of the solar system some 4.5 billion years ago.
In January 2004, the European space probe Rosetta set off to meet up with comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko. The comet rendezvous is planned for this year, in 2014 - a voyage of ten years for a rendez-vous of a few months. Just enough time to accompany the comet on its journey towards the sun with a single object: will Rosetta succeed in decrypting the cosmic message borne by the comet so that we will be able to write a new chapter of our history?
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