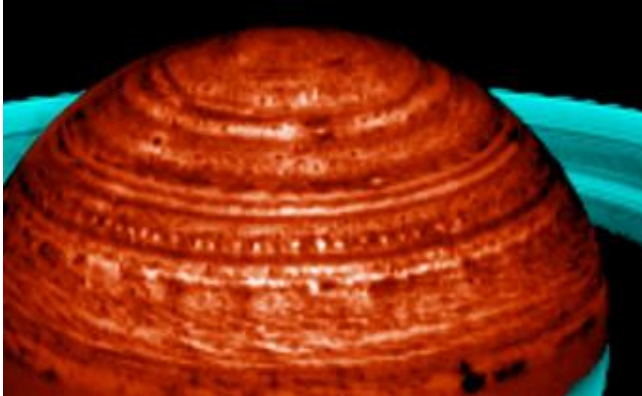


Cassini Image Shows Saturn Draped in a String of Pearls



In this new image, the bright "pearls" are actually clearings in Saturn's deep cloud system. Image credit: NASA/JPL/University of Arizona.

Saturn appears dressed to the nines, "wearing" a strand of "pearls" in a stunning infrared image from the Cassini spacecraft that showcases a meteorological phenomenon.

The image, acquired by Cassini's visual and infrared mapping spectrometer, shows Saturn lit by its own internal, thermal glow. Clearly visible is a 60,000-kilometer-long (37,000 miles) string of bright "pearls," which are actually clearings in Saturn's deep cloud system.

The findings are being presented today at the Division for Planetary Sciences Meeting of the American Astronomical Society held in Pasadena, Calif.

More than two dozen cloud clearings appear at Saturn's north latitude. Each clearing follows another at a regular spacing of about 3.5 degrees in longitude. This is the first time such a regular and extensive train of cloud clearings has been observed, indicating that they may be a result of a large planetary cloud formation or wave that might encircle the whole planet.

Scientists plan to continue observing this phenomenon over the next few years to try to learn more about Saturn's deep circulation systems and meteorology.

Source: NASA

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