



A Monster Dust Devil Stalks the Martian Landscape

ESP_o26394_2160



A dust devil the size of a terrestrial tornado towers above the Martian surface in this late springtime afternoon image of Amazonis Planitia. Also captured by the Context Camera on MRO, the length of the shadow indicates that the dust plume reached a height of 20 kilometers (12 miles) above the surface! This height refers to the top of the disconnected dust clouds above the plume; the continuous column of dust reached about half that altitude. Despite its gargantuan height, the plume is only 140 meters (140 yards) in diameter, giving it a snake-like appearance that is twisted by high altitude winds.

The HIRISE camera onboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is the most powerful one of its kind ever sent to another planet. Its high resolution allows us to see Mars like never before, and helps other missions choose a safe spot to land for future exploration. Thousands of images are available online at: uahirise.org.