

Only on Mars

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The South Polar terrain of Mars has a landscape unlike anywhere on Earth. In this scene groups of radially-organized channels, informally called "spiders" or more formally "araneiform terrain," are visible in rows. Spiders come in many sizes and are thought to be formed by erosion in the Martian spring. In the winter-time a seasonal polar cap composed of dry ice covers the polar region. In the spring, the gas escaping from under the ice erodes the channels in the surface.

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.