This image was taken in the early hours of October 26, 2000, near the closest approach of NEAR Shoemaker’s low-altitude flyover of Eros.
Eros at Close Approach

This image was taken in the early hours of October 26, 2000, near the closest approach of NEAR Shoemaker's low-altitude flyover of Eros. At that time, the spacecraft's digital camera was looking at a region just 4.3 miles (7 kilometers) away, about 1,150 feet (350 meters) across. Most of the scene is covered in rocks of all sizes and shapes, but the floors of some craters are smooth, suggesting accumulation of fine regolith. For scale, the large boulder just below and to the right of the center of the picture is about 50 feet (15 meters) across. The smallest visible rocks are about 5 feet (1.4 meters) across.

(Image 0147953228)

NEAR Mission

As the first launch in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) Discovery Program, the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) mission is setting the stage for asteroidal exploration and forming a base of knowledge that will be the framework for future asteroid missions. The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL) designed and built the NEAR Shoemaker spacecraft and manages the mission for NASA. The Mission Team is drawn internationally from universities, government agencies and private industry.

Launched February 17, 1996, NEAR Shoemaker began its orbital mission at asteroid 433 Eros on February 14, 2000. From May through August 2000, the spacecraft traveled in a circular orbit at a radius of 31 miles (50 kilometers) from the center of Eros. It was then boosted to a higher orbit to view Eros from the direction of the sun. In late December 2000, NEAR Shoemaker will descend to a 22-mile (35-kilometer) orbit and operate at that altitude or lower for the remainder of the mission. By February 2001, the NEAR mission will provide the first comprehensive data on the physical geology, composition and geophysics of an asteroid.

For more information visit the NEAR Web site: http://near.jhuapl.edu.