

MARS SIX-PART SERIES PREMIERES NOVEMBER 14 AT 9/8C ON NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

RACE TO THE RED PLANET



NOVEMBER 2016

EXPLORE



50 Years of Martian Invasions

Even before humans landed on Earth's moon, we'd been sending spacecraft to our closest planetary neighbor, Mars. As these craft have flown past, orbited around, landed on, and driven over the surface of Mars, there have been utter failures and spectacular successes. As NASA sets its sights on a manned Mars mission in the 2030s, we look back on mission history.

MISSIONS TO MARS

Each line below is color-coded to represent one mission that reached Mars, or failed in the attempt; the type of mission; and the country of origin.



NOTABLE MISSIONS



Mariner 4
U.S. 1964
This flyby provided the first close-up photos of Mars.

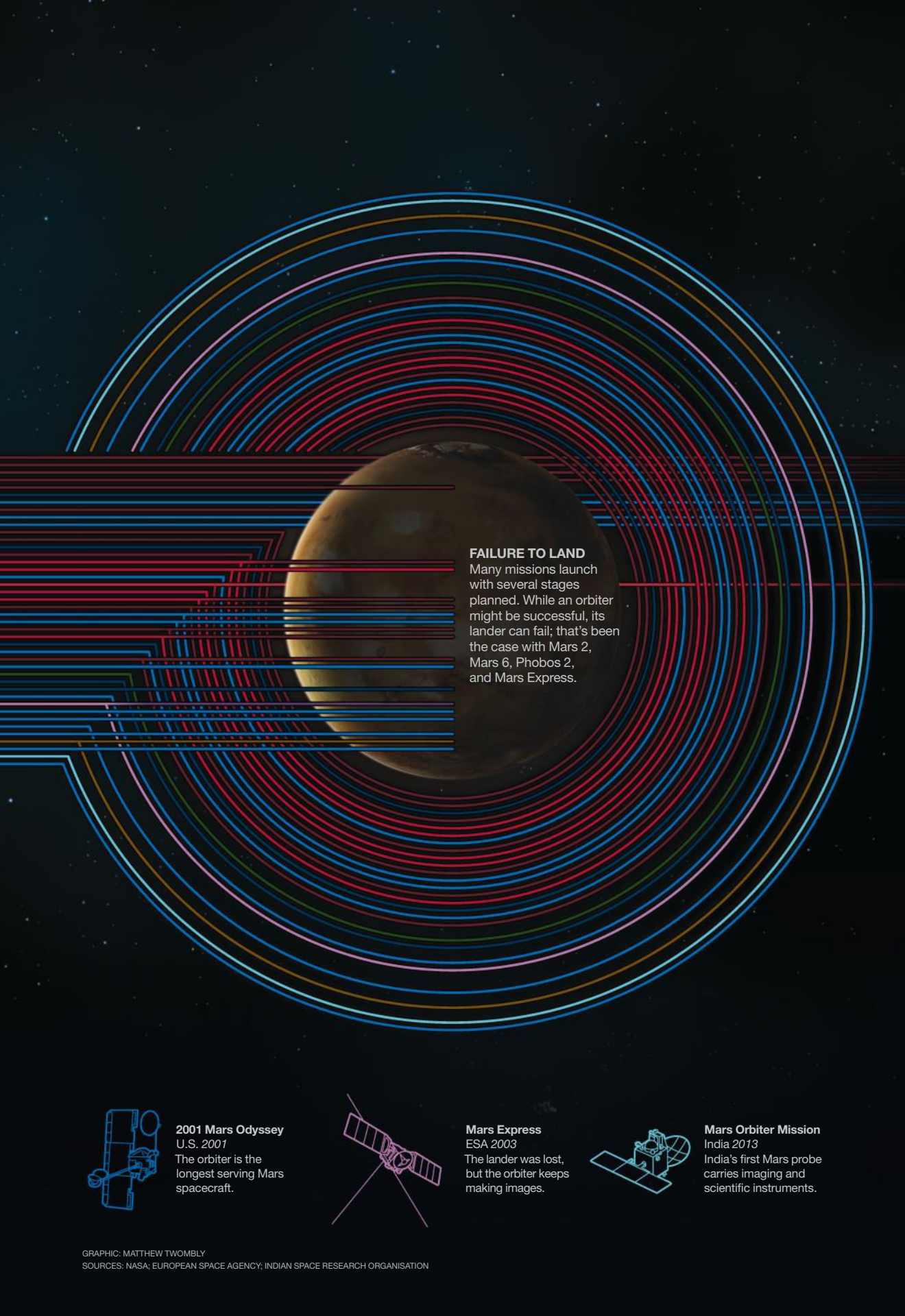


Mars 3
U.S.S.R. 1971
This was the first successful lander, though it stopped transmitting after 20 seconds.



Viking 1 & 2
U.S. 1975
The first U.S. landers on Mars returned color images from the surface.

*All Mars missions launched as of August 2016

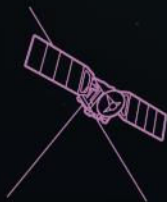


FAILURE TO LAND

Many missions launch with several stages planned. While an orbiter might be successful, its lander can fail; that's been the case with Mars 2, Mars 6, Phobos 2, and Mars Express.



2001 Mars Odyssey
U.S. 2001
The orbiter is the longest serving Mars spacecraft.



Mars Express
ESA 2003
The lander was lost, but the orbiter keeps making images.



Mars Orbiter Mission
India 2013
India's first Mars probe carries imaging and scientific instruments.