

The nature trail and the solar system model

Along the western side of the village Höfn is a trail with scenic views towards the glaciers of Vatnajökull National Park. During wintertime one can also enjoy the starry night sky and the northern lights. The South East Iceland Nature Center, supported by the municipality of Hornafjörður, intend to dedicate the trail to the nature, in wide sense, hence its nickname "Náttúrustígur", the "Nature trail".

Along the trail is a model of the solar system, scaled down more than 2.1 billion fold, with sizes and distances in correct proportions. The Sun (diameter 65 cm) is situated at the Óslandshæð hill, just south of the village (see map), with the planets distributed along the trail. The diameter of the planets ranges from 1 mm to 6,5 cm. They are molded on top of a metal poles, based on a gabbroic boulders from the nearby Litlahorn mountain. A information signs are attached to each boulder.

The walk from the Sun to the planet Neptune is 2.8 km long and it takes less than hour to finish it one way. Information about the dwarf planet Pluto are placed there, as officially the trail ends there. Enthusiastics can still continue to a point were the mean distance of Pluto's orbit is sited. This part of the walk crosses the golf course of Silfurnes so one should stay aware of golf balls!

Other interesting aspects of the nature such as bird activity and the coastal life can be enjoyed from the trail, along with the solar system model.



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The Nature trail

Tour the solar system



Pluto

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as a planet anymore, however his presence is intended to remind that the solar system extends far beyond the orbits of the outer planets. The walk between Neptune and Pluto is 980 m long. The model's size of Pluto is similar as a pin head (0.15% of the Sun's diameter). The light travel time is 5.5 hours to reach Pluto after leaving the Sun.

Uranus

The walk between Saturn and Uranus is 870 m long. The size of the planet is a bit less than one EUR coin (4% of the Sun's size). The light reaches Uranus 2.6 hours after leaving the Sun.

Ceres

This is the largest asteroid in the asteroid belt and categorized as a dwarf planet. In the model its size is comparable to a pin's head (0.0006% of the Sun's size). The walk between Mars and Ceres is 93 m. The travel time of the light, from the Sun to Ceres, is 23 minutes.

Mars

The walk from Earth to Mars is 37 m. The distance to the Sun is now 106 m. The tiny Mars resembles fine grained sand (0.5% of the Sun's size). The light, travelling from the Sun, reaches Mars in 13 minutes.

Mercury

The distance between the Sun and Mercury on the trail is just about 27 m. When scaled down the planet Mercury is like a coarse grain of sand (0.4% of the Sun's size). The light travels 3.2 minutes from sun to Mercury .

Neptune

The walk from Uranus to Neptune is 1070 m long. The diameter of Neptune is similar as Uranus (3.5% of the Sun's diameter). The light travels to Neptune in about 4.2 hours.

Saturn

The distance between Jupiter and Saturn is 406 m. The planet's size in the model is somewhat like a mandarin (8% of the Sun's size). Saturn rings are not presented but would encircle the planet up to about 6 cm distance. It takes the light 1.3 hours to reach Saturn after leaving the Sun.

Jupiter

Jupiter is the largest planet in the solar system. Its modelled size is similar as a tennis ball (10% of the Sun's size). The walking distance between Ceres and Jupiter is 228 m. The light needs 43 minutes of travel time, from the Sun before entering Jupiter.

Earth

Walk 19 m from Venus to the planet Earth. The scaled down Earth is only little bit larger than Venus (0.9% of the Sun's size). The light travels from sun to Earth in 8.3 minutes. It takes a person, walking at an average speed, less than a minute to cover the scaled down distance. If the light travelled at such speed the velocity of light would be tenfold faster than it actually is.

Venus

The walk from Mercury to Venus is about 23 m. The scaled down planet Venus is just like a bean in the model (0.9% of the Sun's size). The light travelling from sun takes about 6 minutes to reach Venus.

The Sun

The model of the solar system begins on Óslandshæð hill. The actual diameter of the Sun is 1.4 million km but is scaled down to 65 cm diameter. The velocity of light is 300 000 km/sec. Despite travelling from sun takes such enormous speed, hours passes after the light leaves the Sun before it approach the most distant planets.