



Mission to Mars: My Vision for Space Exploration

Buzz Aldrin , Leonard David

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“Any time an Apollo-era astronaut steps forward with ideas for our future in space, it’s time to stop what whatever we’re doing and pay attention. Buzz Aldrin, one of the first moonwalkers, has no shortage of these ideas. And in *Mission to Mars* he treats us to how, when, and why we should travel there.” —**Neil deGrasse Tyson**

Legendary "space statesman" Buzz Aldrin speaks out as a vital advocate for the continuing quest to push the boundaries of the universe as we know it. As a pioneering astronaut who first set foot on the moon during mankind's first landing of Apollo 11--and as an aerospace engineer who designed an orbital rendezvous technique critical to future planetary landings--Aldrin has a vision, and in this book he plots out the path he proposes, taking humans to Mars by 2035.

Foreword by Andrew Aldrin

Chapter 1: The View from Air Force One

Chapter 2: Time for Decision-making

Chapter 3: Your Space: Building the Business Case

Chapter 4: Dreams of My Moon

Chapter 5: Voyage to Armageddon

Chapter 6: The March to Mars

Chapter 7: Homesteading the Red Planet

Chapter 8: The Clarion Call

Mission to Mars: My Vision for Space Exploration Details

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Ray Palmer says

I have a fascination with Mars. From Dante's mystical forays to Kim Stanley Robinson's terraforming epics, from Burroughs' pulp to Bradbury's poetry, I can't get enough. If the government's going to spend money on space exploration, it should be with an eye to create a self sustaining colony on Mars. Anything short of that is a failure. I believe solely focusing on unmanned space exploration will lead to waning public interest and minimal funding. The trickle of data will slowly decrease. Scientists may be able to use it to find out a bunch of cool stuff, but it will be increasingly esoteric to the average Joe. We recently did a Pluto fly by, but popular culture has already moved on.

Of course, manned space exploration doesn't guarantee public interest either. Space has got to be relatively easy and accessible and then it can be profitable. Getting to that point is not easy, and I wouldn't be surprised if it never happened. But, oh, how I wish it would!

If a pep talk about going to Mars is what you need then Aldrin's Mission to Mars is the book for you. Unfortunately that's about all it provides. It's haphazard, scattershot, poorly organized, and poorly argued. It's three parts raw enthusiasm, two parts self aggrandizement, with a few interesting ideas sprinkled in for flavor.

Among the latter are the "Aldrin Cyclor" system of space ships. These are perpetually orbiting ships that never stop. You'd take a shuttle out to the cyclor as it comes close to Earth and ride it to Mars. Once there you'd hop off onto a similar shuttle and the cyclor continues on it's way back to Earth.

The other cool idea is his approach to going back to the Moon. In short, he argues that other countries should do that. Instead the US should focus on developing the cyclor technology within the Earth-Moon system, and otherwise develop infrastructure — communication satellites, Earth-Moon Lagrange point space stations and fuel depots, etc. — and exchange usage of these resources with other countries that want to develop a presence on the moon. Once the technology is developed we expand it to Earth-asteroid and Earth-Mars systems.

In my opinion the notion that there will be any kind of return on investment on space exploration in the near future has to be abandoned. If space ever becomes profitable it will be a long time from now and will require mining mineral rich asteroids (keep in mind that a space windfall on iron, gold and other valuable resources would decimate the mining economy on Earth) and Helium-3 mining for fusion purposes. But that is dependent on actually creating a viable Helium-3 fusion technology first.

In that sense I think the book is misleading when it comes to economic opportunities.

Mars won't be a financially profitable excursion. We won't find extraterrestrial life there. We should go to Mars purely for the thrill of the technical challenge involved. And if we don't find that challenge worth pursuing, get used to terra firma, because we'll never leave.

I've heard Zubrin's books about Mars are better. I need to give them a try.

Kate Rauner says

I wanted to read this book because I find myself becoming disenchanted with the idea of colonizing Mars. Exploring Mars sounds exciting, but I don't think I would want to move to Mars. I haven't found a reason why I would spend huge amounts of time and effort to become a subsistence farmer on the edge of starvation, suffocation, and freezing, all while living in a tiny box with practically no privacy. Would there really be any time to explore? I want someone to argue me out of my view.

Buzz Aldrin, writes that "humanity is destined to explore, settle, and expand outward into the universe." Aldrin's book includes some autobiographical information as well as his vision for the future. There are over eighty illustrations and an appendix that lays out the timeline of past US space policy. Aldrin is conversational and sometimes repetitive. He does not present a tightly constructed argument or a highly technical discussion. This book will not tell you how microwaves transmitted to Earth will be transmogrified into electricity, or what a solar electric propulsion system actually is, although these technologies are mentioned.

Aldrin's vision is incremental. He discusses politics and finance. His plan includes practical, profit-making missions to the moon, and exploration and manipulation of Near Earth Objects to enhance our survivability on Earth. He quotes science fiction author Larry Niven as saying "the dinosaurs became extinct because they didn't have a space program."

Next exploration bases would be established on the moons of Mars, which would use rovers with radically new designs to explore the Martian surface. Ultimately, permanent colonies would be established on Mars

It is amazing to realize that a man born at the start of the Great Depression has walked on the moon and now plans for colonists to live on Mars. I'm not yet convinced I want to move to Mars, but I'm thinking.

DonkeyPopsicle says

This is not a book, but rather just another stop on the Buzz Aldrin self-promotion train (although a bit less embarrassing than his appearance on WWE). It's admitted explicitly that this is really just Buzz Aldrin's notes stitched together only semi-coherently by science writer Leonard David. The major result is an extremely short (210 pages of main text, triple spaced, with at least 40% of the space taken up by pictures), shallow tour of stuff that Buzz Aldrin has been thinking about or been involved in over the last twenty years. The major ideas, such as cyclers (spaceships that are on fixed paths between Mars and Earth), need much more expansion, but instead we get tons of tiny, pointless ideas that add nothing to the overall picture (this foundation was created for this purpose, this thinktank was created that purpose, and on and on). Of course, we even get a some recollection of Buzz Aldrin's time on the moon, I guess to be inspiring (see also the various picture of Buzz looking off into the distance quasi-visionary-like), but it just comes off as self-aggrandizing. It can probably be read cover-to-cover in two hours, but even that would be a waste of time.

Aziz SiHweil says

3.5

Tom says

A practical guide to future space exploration with asteroids and Mars as a destination. Mars would be a planet to colonize not just explore.

David R. says

Let's start by my stating that Edwin Aldrin is an incredibly bright guy. He single handedly solved glaring problems with space walking during Project Gemini and may have helped sign the deal for so-called Lunar Orbit Rendezvous that made Apollo 11 possible. That said, Aldrin also has the annoying habit of writing like the smartypants kid in our school classrooms: always characterizing his ideas as bold and brilliant while denigrating those of others. In this book (or is a collection of speeches? Multiple repetitions of ideas suggest the latter) Aldrin lays down a vision for achieving a mission to Mars. It's entrancing but probably not going to happen for a long time. Another peskiness is name-dropping Aldrin's new penchant for sucking up to the current president. Mr. O shows up a LOT in this book and one gets the distinct impression Aldrin is regularly calling the White House to sell his latest ideas. Some may see parallels between Aldrin's boosterisms with those of Werner Von Braun in the 1950s, but I think Von Braun was much better able to connect with the average American than the I-am-so-smart-don't-you-forget-it Buzz Aldrin. I've read two of these so far: it's high to move on!

Todd Martin says

Buzz Aldrin is best known for his career as a US astronaut and for being the second person to ever set foot on the moon. But that was 45 years ago. Today he remains deeply engaged in the space program and wants the US to set its sights on putting a man on Mars. Aldrin lays out his vision in *Mission to Mars: My Vision for Space Exploration* a book that includes very specific suggestions for technology development, budgeting, oversight, communication and public policy as well as a time table with detailed intermediary goals for making this dream a reality. Aldrin makes the case that such a high visibility, national goal would have broad social benefits by promoting investment in STEM education (science, technology, engineering and math) and in inspiring students to pursue these fields. It could also spur cooperation and beneficial relations among nations who would need to work together to develop the infrastructure necessary to make outer space exploration routine.

I admire Aldrin's vision and completely agree that a broad national goal could focus the collective energy of the country in a positive direction that could be socially and technologically transformative. In fact, we know this possibility exists because Kennedy's goal to put a man on the moon by the end of the 1960's had exactly that effect. Unfortunately, it remains to be seen whether the US still has the capability to do big things. Local and federal elected officials seem intent on political gamesmanship and playing small ball with regards to public policy. Instead of a mission to Mars or a transformative energy, communication, education, or

transportation program we are instead treated to wars of choice, 50x attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, scandal-mongering, and political gridlock. Aldrin is hopeful that the country can rise above its base inclinations to accomplish great things, but given the level of polarization and shortsighted foolishness of our elected officials I have to confess to some skepticism on this point.

The alternative would be for the private sector to step in and fill the gap, but I'm not holding my breath. In addition to the fact that the private sector's only motivation lies in short term profit (entirely lacking in establishment of a human base on Mars), the SpaceX program is still working on attainment of low-Earth orbit. Given that this modest goal was achieved by the US government in 1966 the private sector is currently lagging almost 50 years behind the public sector (and have only made it that far thanks to NASA's assistance).

As to the book, I found it interesting and was impressed with several of Aldrin's ideas, in particular that of a Mars Cyler. My only criticism is that the text is serviceable, but not exceptionally well-written. The book read quite a bit like a policy paper that's been polished up a bit for presentation to a public audience.

Erika says

There's a lot of good information if you don't know much about recent ideas and goals for Mars. Unfortunately I have listened to way too much Neil Degrasse Tyson's Star Talk and most of this was old news. The audiobook narrator was also super boring.

GT says

Buzz Aldrin is a brilliant, talented, revered figure. I was excited to get his last book as a birthday gift from my brother. With the recent successful launch of the next generation spacecraft, Orion, on 12-5-14, the timing seemed perfect for tackling this book.

I did enjoy it, but honestly, not as much as I anticipated. And probably that is my fault. This book delivers a compelling argument and thesis on the steps necessary to get mankind to Mars, exactly as it advertises it will! But for me the romance of space travel was somehow lost and I found this a very dry read. I also found it somewhat repetitive on particular points. For example, Aldrin must bring up at least 3 times that a manned mission to Mars in 2035 would occur 66 years after he stepped on the Moon in the Apollo 11 mission. This 66 year time span correlates exactly to the 66 years between Apollo 11 and man's first controlled, powered and sustained heavier-than-air human flight (the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk). I know he means this as a mechanism to keep us focused on getting to Mars, but it seems somewhat a stretch...

I did learn an awful lot. Specifically I loved the idea of Cyler Vehicles. From their description, Aldrin proposes multiple space ships that continuously shuttle between Earth and Mars forever without requiring a significant amount of propellant to keep them in motion and on track. They'd make use of gravitational forces and require 2+ years to complete the journey. Wow, now that is cool.

To summarize, this is a good book that goes to great lengths to discuss the many pros and cons about near-future manned space exploration, and what resources, research, and willpower it will take to get us there.

3 Stars

- ★ = Horrid waste of time
 - ★★ = May be enjoyable to some, but not me
 - ★★★ = I am glad I read it
 - ★★★★ = Very enjoyable and something I'd recommend
 - ★★★★★ = A rare find, simply incredible
-

Wesley Roth says

I was fortunate this summer to meet Buzz Aldrin in Rapid City and get my copy of "Mission to Mars" signed by the legendary Apollo 11 astronaut. I also was able to hear him speak at the South Dakota School of Mines regarding his experiences and his advocacy for Mars exploration.

"Mission to Mars" is definitely an engineer-based book, with lots of technical details and ideas, which can be hard to understand in certain chapters. But Aldrin and his co-author Leonard David, have done a good job in writing a book for the general, non-engineer, public. Aldrin makes a strong case for NOT going back to the moon, but to join other countries in making humans on Mars possible. He is aware that private-sector funding is key, teaming up with NASA and federal funding. His case is strong and well-thought out and I hope, as he hopes, that the 45th president of the United States will make the statement: "I believe this nation should commit itself, within two decades, to commencing American permanence on the planet Mars." Would be the biggest news story of my generation!

Jim says

I wanted to like this more than I did. It had a lot of good information, but it was often redundant & all of it was soaked in propaganda & his ego. His ideas on where we should focus our attention in space & why are great. The delivery just sucked.

The propaganda: America is the leader, will be, should be. I don't have a problem with that in small doses, but these doses were too big. Felt like I was listening to an old Army flick.

The ego: This was very much about him & he never missed an opportunity to make it more so. Most leaders in the field were introduced as 'my good friend' or not mentioned at all. It detracted from the subject too often. He deserves to be proud & he's one of my heroes. That's not what this book was supposed to be about, though.

If you're into space, you should probably read or listen to this. There's not much I hadn't heard or read about before on the tech side, but the politics & economics were interesting from his perspective. On the tech side, we've blown past a lot of it when SpaceX touched down on the barge in April 2016. To be fair, that wasn't really thought to be a possibility back when Aldrin published this book - all of 4 years ago.

Valerie says

Buzz Aldrin is a pretty fantastic guy. I got to hear him speak at my semi-local library when his handler wasn't cutting him off for telling inappropriate stories. I still want to know about the iguanas, lady! Who cares if there are children present?

This book outlines Buzz's vision of both privately-funded and government space exploration with the ultimate goal of getting settlers to Mars. It's written simply enough (and with lots of pictures) that a non-scientist like myself can understand it and is well sourced among Buzz's fellow genius colleagues. He addresses both the science and the funding aspect to propose a very different mission from our space exploration forays of the past, one based on collaboration and long-term thinking rather than competitive races.

I'm not versed enough to speak to the validity of his claims, but as a fan of science and science fiction, I can say it's an intriguing future, and one I hope I live to see.

Steve M. says

Let me preface my comments by telling you that the Apollo astronauts were my childhood heroes. Especially Neil and Buzz. That being said, I was not all that impressed by this book. Aldrin's outline for the future of the space program and mission to Mars is sensible but not exciting. Buzz has accomplished incredible things in his lifetime and I don't wish to diminish any of that. Perhaps it's not the content or ideas that bothered me but the style in which it is written. The book is highly repetitive. Annoyingly so. There is also a bit of a condescending tone as if an elder is instructing a novice. Which, of course is true but not a comfortable position to be in as a reader.

Two stars for Mission to Mars,
All of the rest for Buzz.

Phil says

Powerful message, but not the best development of argument and It feels quite disconnected from modern socio-economics.

Heather Goss says

This book is...fine. I'd be tempted to give it two stars, but I think this book serves a purpose for people who don't know much about space policy and are interested in hearing about how we might realistically do a Mars trip. If, on the other hand, you've heard Buzz Aldrin speak--ever--you already know everything that's printed here.

I have no doubt co-author Leonard David is to thank for giving this a modicum of structure and reining in Aldrin's wild ego--though both problems remain to some extent. It's all pretty surface level stuff, so this is a

perfectly fine book to give to someone who has mild curiosity in lots of topics and would get something out of quick read on the subject.
