



NASA Spaceship Reaches Ultima Thule

NASA's **New Horizons** spacecraft will fly past the icy object nicknamed **Ultima Thule (TOO-lee)** in Kuiper belt.

- Ultima Thule is located 1.6 billion kilometers beyond Pluto and 6.4 billion kilometers from Earth.
- The spacecraft will fly past within 3,500 kilometers of Ultima Thule.

Ultima Thule

- This Kuiper Belt object was **discovered** by the **Hubble Space Telescope in 2014**.
- Officially it is known as **2014 MU69** and is nicknamed as Ultima Thule.
- Thule means the most distant places beyond the known world.

Significance

- Ultima Thule will be the **farthest object ever visited by a spacecraft**.
- Ultima Thule would have relics dating back to solar system's origin 4.5 billion years ago. No spacecraft has visited anything so primitive. This will help in **understanding the origins of our solar system**.
- The mission will also help in **studying the Ultima Thule**.

New Horizon

- **Launched:** Jan. 19, 2006
- **Pluto Flyby:** July 14, 2015
- **Ultima Thule Flyby:** Jan. 1, 2019
- **Goal:** Study Pluto, its moons, and Kuiper Belt objects.

Kuiper Belt

- The Kuiper Belt (also known as the Edgeworth-Kuiper belt) is a region of the Solar System that **exists beyond the eight major planets**, extending from the orbit of Neptune (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun. (**1 Astronomical Unit (AU) = distance between the Earth and the Sun**)
- It is similar to the asteroid belt, in that it contains many small bodies, all remnants from the Solar System's formation.