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WHEN TO SEE MARCH'S SOLAR & LUNAR ECLIPSES



#238 MARCH 2025

Sky at Night

THE UK'S BEST-SELLING ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE

MARS A NEW ERA

As NASA's rover enters unexplored territory, the story so far...

**WHY WE NEED TO CHANGE
OUR ADDICTION TO LIGHT**

**60 YEARS OF
SPACEWALKS**



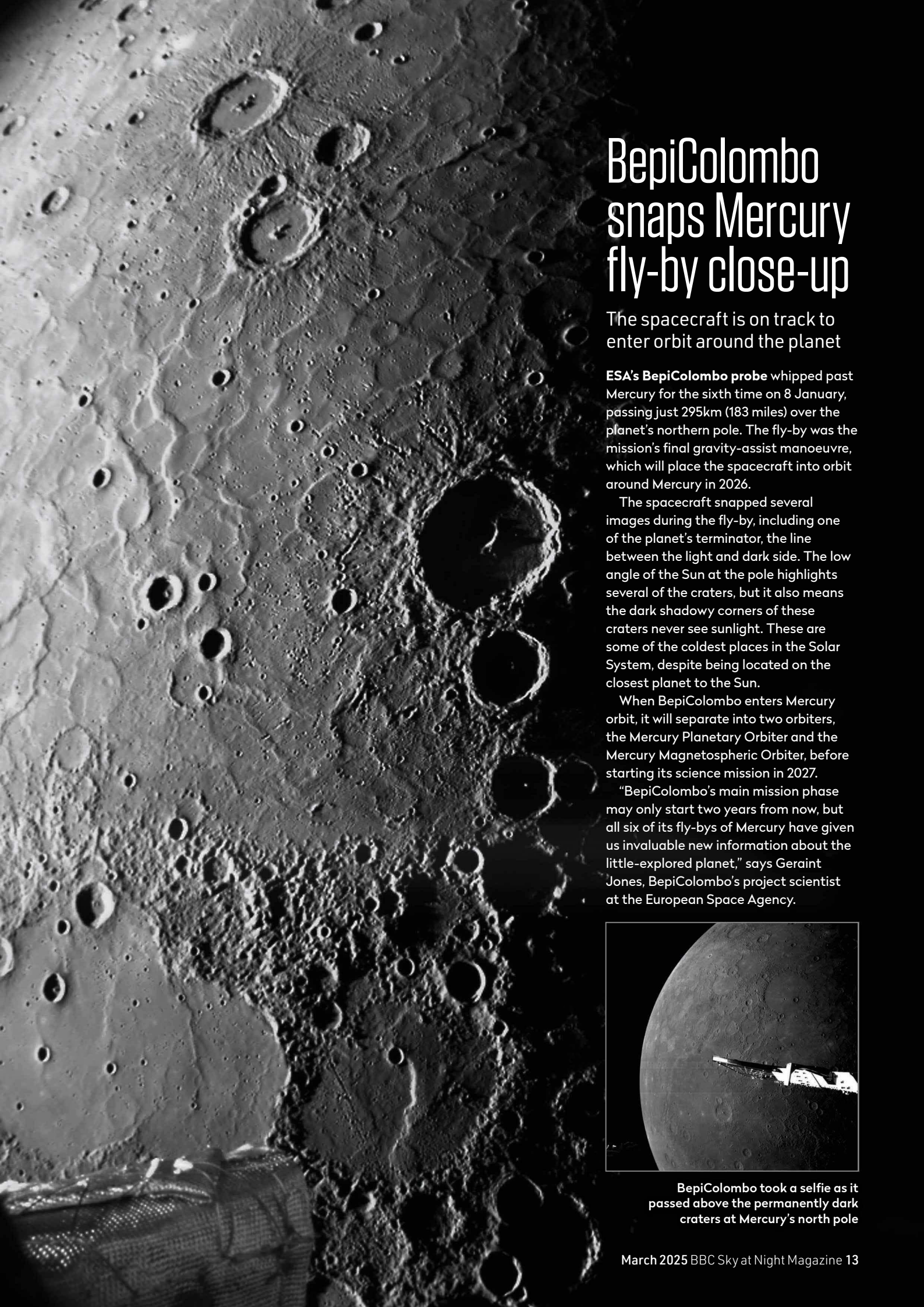
PLUS
How to watch
and image the
ISS passing
overhead



**STAR TEST: CANON'S R8
MIRRORLESS CAMERA**

**WHY SATURN'S RINGS WILL
DISAPPEAR THIS MONTH**

**THE NEW THEORY THAT COULD
OVERTHROW DARK ENERGY**



BepiColombo snaps Mercury fly-by close-up

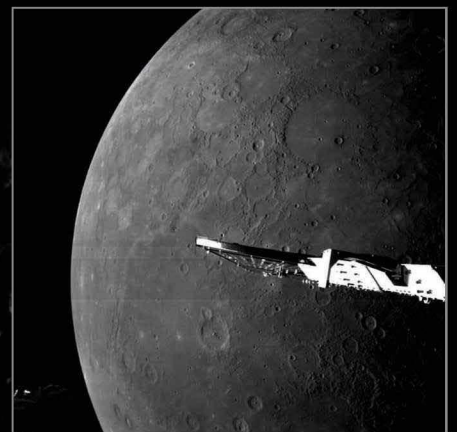
The spacecraft is on track to enter orbit around the planet

ESA's **BepiColombo** probe whipped past Mercury for the sixth time on 8 January, passing just 295km (183 miles) over the planet's northern pole. The fly-by was the mission's final gravity-assist manoeuvre, which will place the spacecraft into orbit around Mercury in 2026.

The spacecraft snapped several images during the fly-by, including one of the planet's terminator, the line between the light and dark side. The low angle of the Sun at the pole highlights several of the craters, but it also means the dark shadowy corners of these craters never see sunlight. These are some of the coldest places in the Solar System, despite being located on the closest planet to the Sun.

When BepiColombo enters Mercury orbit, it will separate into two orbiters, the Mercury Planetary Orbiter and the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter, before starting its science mission in 2027.

"BepiColombo's main mission phase may only start two years from now, but all six of its fly-bys of Mercury have given us invaluable new information about the little-explored planet," says Geraint Jones, BepiColombo's project scientist at the European Space Agency.



BepiColombo took a selfie as it passed above the permanently dark craters at Mercury's north pole