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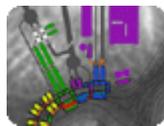
## Mars Plan Envisions Comfy Colony By Mark Baard

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A group of aspiring Martians has drawn up detailed plans for settling the Red Planet, and is working on a cookbook that will use ingredients grown on Mars.

The [Mars Foundation](#) is proposing a settlement in the next 20 years that would start with a dozen initial inhabitants and eventually expand to several hundred.



[See photos](#)

The settlement, about the size of Boston's North End neighborhood, will use local materials for construction and provide the comforts of home to *terran* migrants, including cars (rovers, actually), garages and living areas with skylights.

"Private living spaces look out across the Martian plain," said Mars Foundation co-founder Joseph E. Palaia IV, a graduate student in nuclear engineering at [MIT](#).

The foundation has even scoped out a potential building site for the settlement, along a hillside 80 yards above the valley floor in an area called [Candor Chasma](#).

Many in the Mars colonization movement believe humans have a deep spiritual and psychological need to seek out and explore new frontiers.

The aim of the foundation's Mars Homestead Project, which started at MIT, is to give humanity a fresh start on a new planet.

People have been captivated by the latest [plans](#) (.pdf) for the Mars Homestead Settlement, said Georgi Petrov, an architect working on the project.

Petrov this month presented the foundation's [findings](#) at the International Conference on Environmental Systems in Rome.

"The coolest thing," Petrov wrote in an e-mail to his co-authors, "was that afterwards, the European astronaut [Claude Nicollier](#) came up to me and he said that he liked it very much and was daydreaming about going to our settlement."

The foundation believes the first interplanetary settlers could be sharing meals under a Martian sky in as little as 20 years.

"We believe it's possible for completion of a 12-person settlement in 2025," said Palaia, "assuming that launch technology and settlement technology development proceeds as planned."

The Mars Homestead plan goes beyond temporary, "tuna-can" habitats for explorers proposed by the [Mars Society](#) (a separate group) and [NASA](#).

"Everything NASA and other independent researchers have envisioned has been in the mode of 'visit, explore and come home,'" said Bruce Mackenzie, a Mars Foundation co-founder.

The Mars settlement will in fact start with cylindrical tuna-can habitats, which settlers will live in while they and robots build permanent structures.

The settlers and robots will work inside pressurized shell areas, and use steel, aluminum, glass and bricks manufactured on Mars, the Mars Foundation believes.

The Mars settlement will also have large living quarters, dining areas and greenhouses with jogging paths, as well as a nearby nuclear power plant and manufacturing facilities.

Interior public spaces will include two-story bamboo forests, "providing psychological benefits as well as building material" to the settlers, said Palaia.

Engineers and scientists from the foundation have spent the past year studying the feasibility of building a settlement with technologies likely to become available soon, and by drawing on Mars' raw materials. The foundation is even calling for quick-and-easy recipe ideas that will be compiled into the [Mars Cookbook](#).

Life on the Mars settlement may be difficult at first. Atmospheric pressure inside the settlement's structures will be similar to that at 14,000 to 15,000 feet on Earth. (Regolith packed against the living quarters will help maintain internal pressure.)

But the settlement's oxygen-enriched atmosphere will make breathing easier.

The Mars Foundation said it is preparing to build a prototype of the settlement on Earth. The foundation would not say where it will be built, citing ongoing negotiations with businesses and politicians.

However, Mars Foundation co-founder Mark Homnick said the model settlement will likely be near a major city, because the foundation wants to get the public excited about exploring new frontiers.

According to Homnick, young people are especially eager to learn more about becoming Martian settlers.

"When I mention it to children," said Homnick, "they just go nuts."



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