

View of Saturn from Cassini Grand Finale Orbits

*Kunio M. Sayanagi¹, John J. Blalock¹, Ulyana A. Dyudina², Shawn P. Ewald², Andrew P. Ingersoll²

1. Hampton University, 2. California Institute of Technology

Cassini spacecraft has been in orbit around Saturn since 2004 and made numerous new discoveries in the Saturn system. The mission entered its final phase on November 29, 2016 when it raised its orbital inclination and lowered its periapsis to 90,000 km from the cloud-top of Saturn at the edge of the main ring system. These high-inclination orbits offer a unique chance to observe the high-latitude regions of Saturn. The north-polar region is now covered in yellowish photochemical haze layer, presumably in response to the increasing solar insolation since the 2009 equinox. On April 22nd, 2017, the Cassini orbiter will change its orbit one last time and lower its periapsis inside the inner-most ring, about 3000 km above the clouds. The spacecraft will orbit the planet 22 times before it enters the atmosphere on September 15, 2017. We will present preliminary findings in images captured during the Grand Finale orbits.

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