

PLANETARY NEWS: CASSINI-HUYGENS (2006)

TWIN LAKES ON TITAN



September 28, 2006

This incredible photograph taken by NASA's Cassini spacecraft shows two lakes on the surface of Saturn's moon Titan, attached by a thin channel. The image was taken during Cassini's most recent flyby, when it passed by on September 23, 2006. On Earth, they'd be filled with water, but it's just too cold on Titan; so these lakes contain a mixture of methane and ethane.

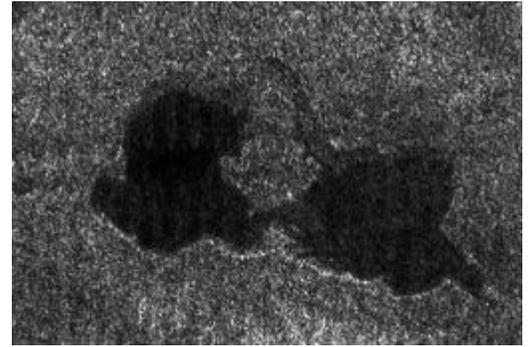
This Cassini radar image shows two lakes "kissing" each other on the surface of Saturn's moon [Titan](#).

The image from a flyby on Sept. 23, 2006, covers an area about 60 kilometers (37 miles) wide by 40 kilometers (25 miles) high.

This pass was primarily dedicated to the ion and neutral mass spectrometer instrument, so although, the volume of radar data was small, scientists were amazed to see Earth-like lakes. With Titan's colder temperatures and hydrocarbon-rich atmosphere, however, the lakes likely contain a combination of methane and ethane, not water.

In this image, near 73 degrees north latitude, 46 degrees west longitude, two lakes are seen, each 20 to 25 kilometers (12 to 16 miles) across. They are joined by a relatively narrow channel. The lake on the right has lighter patches within it, indicating that it may be slowly drying out as the northern summer approaches.

The [Cassini-Huygens mission](#) is a cooperative project of NASA, the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, manages the mission for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, Washington, D.C. The Cassini orbiter and its two onboard cameras were designed, developed and assembled at JPL. The imaging operations center is based at the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colo.



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Titan's "Kissing Lakes"

Credit: NASA/JPL

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