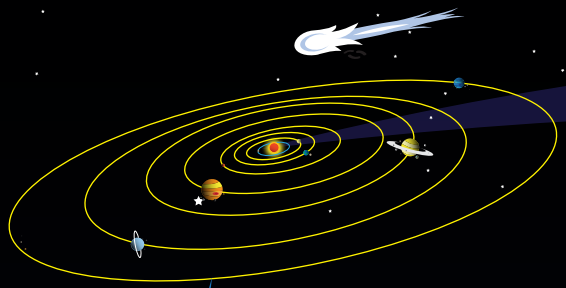
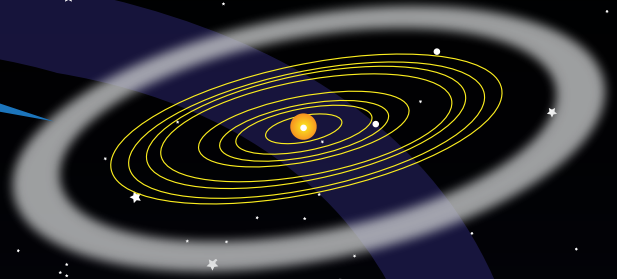
Where does the solar system end?

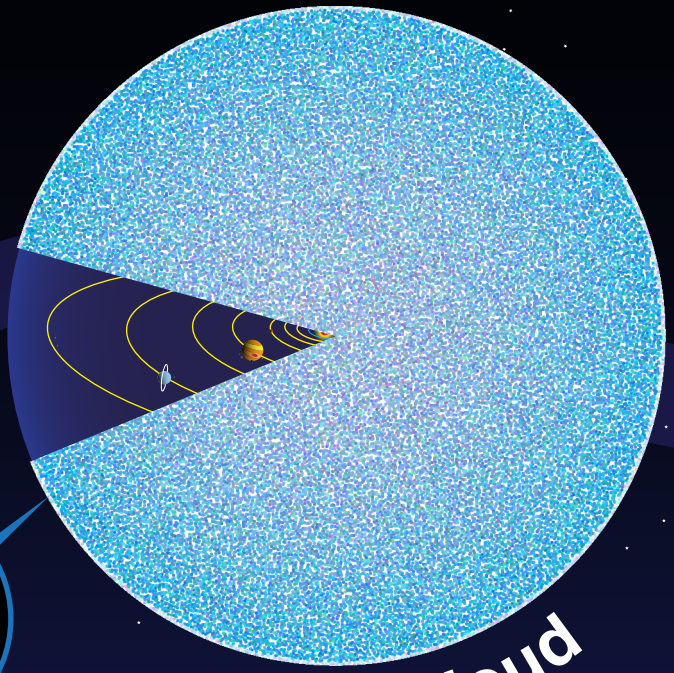
National Aeronautics and Space Administration



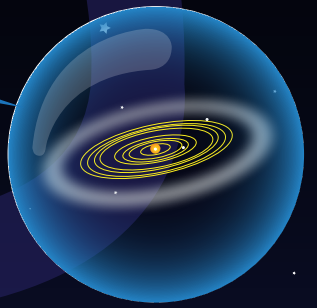
The solar system we call home has our sun, eight planets, all their moons, the asteroid belt, and lots of comets.

Outside Neptune's orbit is the Kuiper Belt. An almost empty ring around the sun that has icy bodies, almost all smaller than Pluto, making slow orbits around the sun.

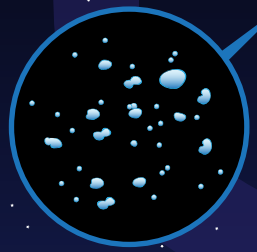




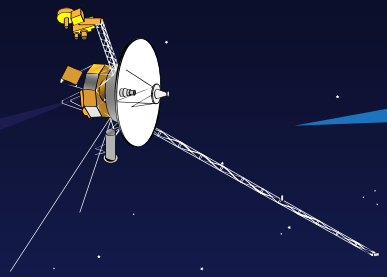
Beyond the fringes of the Kuiper belt is the Oort Cloud. Unlike the orbits of the planets and the Kuiper Belt, which are pretty flat like a disk, it's a giant spherical shell surrounding the sun, planets, and Kuiper Belt Objects. Like a big bubble with thick walls around our solar system.



The Oort cloud is made of icy pieces of space debris the sizes of mountains and sometimes larger. This is where some comets come from.



Oort Cloud



The Voyager 1 spacecraft took 35 years to leave the sun's magnetic influence. It's traveling one million miles each day. At that speed, it will take 300 years to reach the inner layer of the Oort Cloud. Then it will take 30,000 years to get through it all. It's that thick!

Space Place in a Snap!

For more information, visit **spaceplace.nasa.gov/oort-cloud**