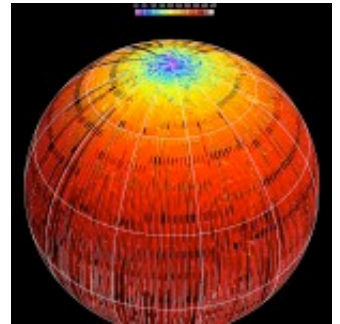


New thermal maps show the Moon gets damn cold

Posted by Hermela Brook | 21 September 2009, 5:28 pm

The LRO has already provided us with a lot of fascinating high-res photos of the Moon's surface. But photos are just the start.

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter also has more instruments aboard and one of them, the Diviner Lunar Radiometer developed and operated by the California Institute of Technology Jet Propulsion Laboratory, is sending back some wild info about the Moon's surface temperature.



The contraption works by measuring the infrared radiation's intensity that's emitted by the lunar surface. The hotter the surface, the greater the emitted infrared radiation's intensity. The map generated by Diviner will likely be used to help plan future manned Moon missions – whenever the hell that might be. But even still some of the info sent back is still of scientific value.

Apparently some spots on the lunar surface are always in a shadow and can nearly reach absolute zero. It's thought that these spots can hold frozen water and might be some of the coldest spots in the galaxy including Pluto. These cold traps as they are called have been theorized about for nearly 50 years so you can imagine geek-types getting excited about the possible confirmation.

The unit will take about six months to complete its survey. The instrument was first turned activated on July 5 though, so it's about 50% done. – CrunchGear

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