

'Super Nova' and Voyager 2

In the early space age, it was realized that a periodic alignment of the outer planets would occur in the late 1970s and enable a single probe to visit Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune by taking advantage of the then-new technique of gravity assisted flight to travel further.

Voyager 2 was launched on August 20, 1977, sixteen days before Voyager I. Its mission to study the gas giants, Jupiter, Saturn, and the ice giants, Uranus, and Neptune. Passing Jupiter and the Jovian System in 1979 and Saturn in 1981. It was the first spacecraft to visit Uranus in 1986, and Neptune in 1989. What were you flying by in those years?

Those detours cost it its lead, its twin, Voyager 1, the hare, reached interstellar space in August 2012. Voyager 2, the tortoise, reached interstellar space on November 5, 2018, following its flyby of Neptune in 1989. (Interstellar space is that area outside the heliopause or the bubble of energetic particles and magnetic fields from the Sun).

Voyager 2 is closing in on 21 billion km's from Earth. As of June 6, 2025 was ruffling the feathers of the constellation Pavo, Latin for Peacock.

A James Webb telescope picture of a Super Nova inspired this piece.

