

Outer Solar System

Illustration of the outer Solar System, including the Sun, rocky planets, asteroid belt, gas planets, Kuiper Belt, and the hypothetical Oort Cloud. Beyond Neptune's orbit lies the Kuiper Belt, home to icy bodies such as Pluto and Eris. It occupies a disc-like region from approximately 30 to 50 astronomical units (AU) from the Sun. Beyond this lies the hypothetical Oort Cloud, a vast, spherical shell of icy remnants extending from roughly 2,000 AU to as far as 100,000 AU (nearly 1.6 light-years), enveloping the Solar System in all directions. While the Kuiper Belt is relatively well-studied, no direct observations of Oort Cloud objects have yet been confirmed. Together, these distant regions preserve material from the early Solar System and are sources of long-period comets that occasionally visit the inner planets.

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