

科学家们在火星南极附近发现了三个地下湖泊。他们还证实了第四个湖泊的存在。

The chances of life surviving on the surface of Mars today are **slim**. The Red Planet is a desert, where temperatures routinely drop below -60C. But there might be places below ground where tiny **organisms** could **scrape an existence**.

火星表面现在存在生命的可能性很小。这颗红色星球是一片沙漠，温度通常低于零下60摄氏度。但在地下的某些地方，微生物可能会勉强生存。

Now, scientists have confirmed the **presence** of four lakes about a kilometre beneath the **Martian** south polar **ice cap**. These lakes are kept liquid by large amounts of dissolved salts, which lower water's freezing point.

现在，科学家已经证实，在火星南极的冰盖下约一公里处，存在四个湖泊。这些湖泊之所以保持液态，是因为大量的溶解盐降低了水的凝固点。

Most life on Earth doesn't **tolerate** such highly **saline** conditions, but a few specialised **microbes** called extremophiles do, thriving in the salty lakes of regions such as **Antarctica**. This raises the possibility that **hardy** organisms could survive today in the **briny** conditions below the Martian south pole.

地球上的大部分生命都无法忍受这种含盐度极高的条件，但一些被称为极端微生物的特殊微生物却能忍受，它们在南极洲等地区的咸水湖泊中繁衍生息。这就提出了一种可能性，即顽强的生物今天可以在火星南极以下的咸水环境中生存。

1. 词汇表

slim	非常小的
organisms	微生物
scrape an existence	勉强生存
presence	存在
Martian	火星的
ice cap	冰盖
tolerate	忍受
saline	含盐的
microbes	微生物，细菌
Antarctica	南极洲
hardy	坚强的
briny	多盐的

2. 阅读理解：请在读完上文后，回答下列问题。（答案见下页）

1. How cold is it on the Red Planet?
2. What is helping to lower the lakes' freezing point?
3. Why can extremophiles exist in some lakes in Antarctica?
4. Where are these lakes located on Mars?

3. 答案

1. How cold is it on the Red Planet?

Very cold! Temperatures routinely drop below -60C.

2. What is helping to lower the lakes' freezing point?

These lakes are kept liquid by large amounts of dissolved salts, which lower water's freezing point.

3. Why can extremophiles exist in some lakes in Antarctica?

Extremophiles are able to survive in very salty conditions.

4. Where are these lakes located on Mars?

The four lakes are located about a kilometre beneath the Martian south polar ice cap.