



THE WANING MOON

This impressive photo of the waning Moon was obtained with the Wide Field Imager (WFI), a 67 million pixel camera at the MPG/ESO 2.2-m Telescope at the ESO La Silla Observatory. The WFI is a joint project between the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the Max-Planck-Institut für Astronomie (MPI-A) in Heidelberg (Germany) and the Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte (OAC) in Naples (Italy). With a field size slightly larger than the Full Moon, this digital camera is able to obtain detailed views of extended celestial objects to very faint magnitudes.

It is the first of a new generation of survey facilities at ESO with which a variety of large-scale searches will soon be made over extended regions of the southern sky. This photo was obtained at sunrise on January 12 at about 10 hrs UT. At that time the Moon was 24.3 days "old", i.e. about 5 days before New Moon. The distinct crater at the center near the "terminator" (the line between "day" and "night") is Kepler; below it is seen the circular Mare Humorum with the large crater Gassendi overlapping its northern rim. At the top, the Sinus Iridum region is partly in the shadow.

Technical information: Several 0.1 sec exposures made through a near-infrared filter (856 nm; FWHM 14 nm) with small offsets were recombined (to cover the gaps between the individual CCD's). One pixel corresponds to about 470 metres on the surface of the Moon at a distance of just over 400,000 km. The field shown is about 24 x 32 sq. arcmin. North is up and East is left.

More information about ESO can be found at URL: <http://www.eso.org>