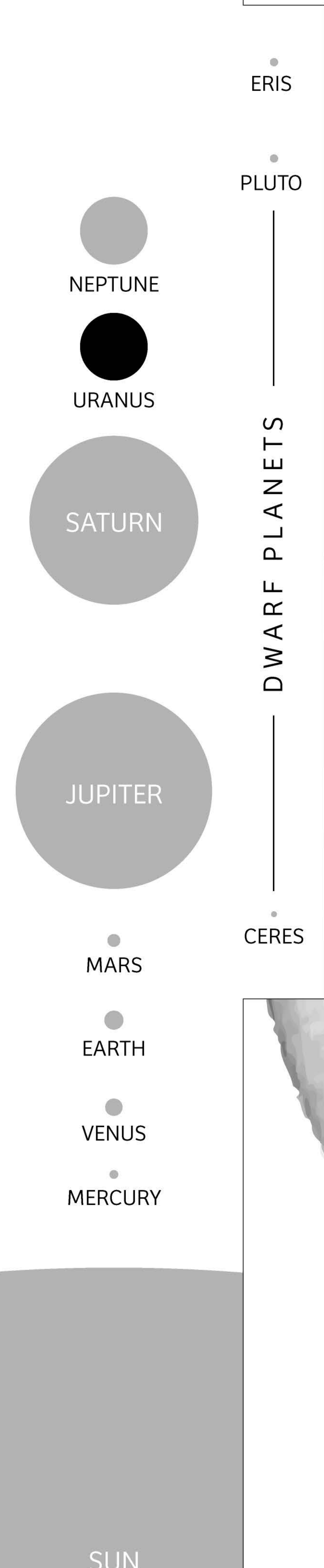


# URANUS: THE SEVENTH PLANET FROM THE SUN: A GAS GIANT



Uranus was discovered by William Herschel in 1781, the first planet to be discovered in modern times, although it had already been seen and catalogued as a star by Flamsteed and others.

The blue appearance of Uranus is due to the absorption of red light in its atmosphere by methane. It is thought that Uranus does not have a rocky core like Jupiter but has its material more uniformly distributed.

Unlike all the other planets, Uranus is tipped over so that it rotates on its side. In 1977, rings were discovered around Uranus when it passed in front of a star. The rings are also tipped over to appear almost vertical.

## URANUS STATISTICS

**Diameter:** 51,119 km (4.0 x Earth)

**Mass:** 14.5 x Earth

**Mean distance from the Sun:** 19.19 AU\*  
(2870 Million km)

**Orbital period (sidereal\*\*):** 84.01 Earth years

**Rotational period**

**(retrograde):** 15 hrs 36 mins

**Moons:** 27

**Rings:** yes ( Radius 40,000-50,000 km)

**Inclination of equator to orbit:** 98 degrees

**Composition:** 83% hydrogen, 15% helium and 2% methane

\* One Astronomical Unit (AU) = mean distance of the Earth from the Sun.

\*\* Sidereal time is time kept with respect to distant stars.

**FASCINATING FACT:** Uranus is tipped over so that it rotates around an axis that is almost parallel to the ecliptic (the plane of its orbit around the Sun). Its unusual rotation may be the result of a collision early in its life.