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One mile, and three kilometres

Two official sizes, and a jumble of similar hills — kept apart on purpose.

A 1976 NASA caption says the feature is “1.5 kilometers (one mile) across.” A THEMIS caption, released 13 April 2002, calls the same famous knob “3-km long.” This sheet does not split the difference.

The official story	Official wording
The official mile	NASA Science, 31 July 1976, and official PIA01141 wording both give “1.5 kilometers (one mile) across,” with the sun angle at approximately 20 degrees.
The official 3-km knob	“This 3-km long knob, located near 10° N, 40° W (320° E), was first imaged by the Viking spacecraft in the 1970’s and was seen by some to resemble a face carved into the rocks of Mars.” Official wording later calls it “a normal geologic feature.”
A jumble of knobs	An official infrared caption, 24 July 2002, says Cydonia is covered with dozens of similar knobs and mesas — “so many in fact that it requires care to discover the “face” among this jumble of knobs and hills.”
Camelback Mountain	Official THEMIS wording: a similar-size hill in Phoenix “resembles a camel lying on the ground,” and Phoenicians “whimsically refer to it as Camelback Mountain,” carved by thousands of years of erosion.

A short quiz

1. Which official caption gives the mile, and which gives the 3-km figure?
2. Do official pages give only one pair of coordinates?
3. Is Camelback Mountain on Mars, officially?

Answers. 1976 / PIA01141 give the mile; THEMIS, 2002, gives the 3-km knob. No — official visible and infrared wordings differ, and this sheet keeps both. No — official wording compares a hill in Phoenix, Arizona.

Wording from NASA Science, “The ‘Face on Mars’,” 31 July 1976; PIA03768, released 13 April 2002; and NASA JPL, PIA03905, 24 July 2002. Official coordinates and sizes are not blended. Checked 18 November 2026. pareidolia.illusions.im is independent of NASA, JPL and Arizona State University. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.